

BLACK YOUNG ADULT LIBERATION: BREAKING  
CHAINS OF OPPRESSIVE LIFESTYLE THROUGH  
A MODEL OF MINISTRY

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **BLACK YOUNG ADULT LIBERATION: BREAKING CHAINS OF OPPRESSIVE LIFESTYLE THROUGH A MODEL OF MINISTRY**

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This ministry model is focused on the many problems faced by person living on Edisto Island community of South Carolina where I serve as pastor of Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church. This project will examine and respond to the problems and challenges of youth and young adults caught in an oppressive destructive lifestyle choice which leads to drug/alcohol addiction, unintended pregnancy, violence in schools, sexuality immorality and poverty. Through the intervention of sermons, bible study and forums led by professionals addressing these ills, persons can see a way toward liberation. A mixed methodology will be used to examine the data.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This endeavor comes into existence through my context at the Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church through the good will and support where I serve as pastor. This work was completed at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio in the focus group Prophetic Preaching and Praxis where Dr. Robert Walker and Dr. Kenneth Cummings, Sr. serve as my mentors and Dr. Harold Cottom as my faculty consultant. I am indebted to each of these extraordinary men for their encouragement, direction, resources, and teaching. I am grateful for the support of Dr. Harold Hudson, Associate Dean of the Doctoral Program. I am also grateful for the dialogue, opinions and input of my professional associates and context associates. Lastly, I am so very grateful and appreciative for my colleagues and classmates at United Theological Seminary for their support and encouragement over the years.

## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this project to my late parents: Horace Brown and Mable Brown, for their extraordinary parenting. Also included are my siblings: Charles, Mary, Ann, John, Debra, and Earl. Thank you for your guidance and confidence early in life and throughout the years. Lastly, I dedicate this work to my immediate family: my spouse Linda and my children Brittany and Brandon. Your support, sacrifice, time and attention helped me to achieve this milestone in my life. Without you all, this Doctor of Ministry Degree would not be achievable. To God be the glory, great things He hath done.

## ILLUSTRATIONS

**Table 1. Pre/Post Forum Survey Questions**

<b><u>Numbers</u></b>	<b><u>Questions</u></b>
Q1.	Most people living oppressive lifestyle are dangerous?
Q2.	Most people who live oppressive lifestyle are honest?
Q3.	I would avoid associating with anyone living oppressive lifestyle?
Q4.	Most people living oppressive lifestyle do not deserve to be liberated?
Q5.	Many people convicted of crime in the courts are overly sentence?
Q6.	The courts are fair to everyone hearing or trial?
Q7.	Person with drug and alcohol addiction can be recovered?
Q8.	I have a great deal of trust and respect for the police?
Q9.	The schools provided the necessary resources for students to achieve high scores and succeed?
Q10.	The School District decisions are fair to all schools in the district?
Q11.	Systematic oppression in relate to black young adults oppressive lifestyle can be overcome?

**Table 2. Liberating Support Questionnaire**

- Q1. This forum was informative?
- Q2. I better understand the faith community's role in supporting person living oppressive lifestyle in the community.
- Q3. I believe the faith community of Edisto Island and Charleston County should help person living oppressive life style in the community.
- Q4. I feel pastors would encourage our congregation to ministry to oppressive lifestyle persons?
- Q5. I believe members in your church would support oppressive lifestyle in effort to liberate them?
- Q6. The faith base community would work hard to remove any obstacles to starting a oppressive lifestyle ministry at your church?
- Q7. I believe and understand systematic oppression highly contributes to black young adult oppressive lifestyle?



**Table 3. Answers to Pre Forum Survey Questions**

<b>Numbers</b>		<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
A1.	24	6	
A2.	27	3	
A3.	26	4	
A4.	27	3	
A5.	20	10	
A6.	22	8	
A7.	15	15	
A8.	18	12	
A9.	14	16	
A10.	19	11	
A11.	13	17	

**Table 4 Answers to Post Forum Survey Questions**

<b>Numbers</b>		<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
A1.	4	26	
A2.	20	10	
A3.	3	27	
A4.	2	28	
A5.	30	0	
A6.	5	25	
A7.	27	3	
A8.	23	7	
A9.	6	24	
A10.	4	26	
A11.	27	3	

**Table 5. Answers to Liberating Support Questionnaire**

<b>Numbers</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>
A1.	30	0
A2.	30	0
A3.	30	0
A4.	26	4
A5.	28	2
A6.	28	2
A7.	26	4

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

AME	African Methodist Episcopal
AMEC	African Methodist Episcopal Church
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version

For my family, it was also always a matter of faith. I cannot remember a time when I did not know God both to be real and to be about bringing justice in this world. I've never experienced the epistemological crisis that is central to so many faith journeys in Western history, when individuals must learn to answer for themselves the question "How can I know that God is real?"

—William J. Barber, II, *The Third Reconstruction*

## **INTRODUCTION**

This project is titled “Black Young Adult Liberation: Breaking the Chains of Oppressive Lifestyle through a Model of Ministry.” In this context I have highlighted several concerns in the life of the church and community that need addressing. One of the primary concerns is there is a problem and shortcoming in light of black young adults’ oppressive lifestyle. These persons need help in order to be liberated from this entanglement.

When we examine the story in Exodus between Egyptians’ oppression of God’s people (the Israelites) found in Exodus 3:6-10, we see a horrible situation of oppression which should not exist between humans and government and its people because they were created equally by God. Yet, God tells Moses that He heard their cry because of their taskmasters (government). Just because one is of a different race does not give people the right to oppress other races. So, God came down from heaven to deliver the people out of the hands of the Egyptians’ oppressive lifestyle to a place of goodness and prosperity. The same can be said for our black young adults’ oppressive lifestyle. Yet, God sent Moses to liberate his people. The same today, God is sending Christian leaders and community leaders to do the same. Young adults have made mistakes while systematically being oppressed. Just as God brought the Israelites out of oppression by the Egyptians, He can bring black youth and young adults out of oppressive lifestyles in America. God offered a choice to make amends for their sins and failures the same way

He did so for the Israelites by repentance and affirming their faith and keeping the covenant and the laws of God. Not only will God accept young adults with oppressive lifestyle, we should as well. God told the children of Israel to go back to what you should have been doing. Keep my covenant and worship God and know others. Therefore, we should do the same in this present age.

As Christians we are called not to do as the Egyptians, but to do as God command us to do, always giving our best to God because it is pleasing to Him. It is recommended that we return to the first two greatest commandments to love God, to love our brother and sisters, and to love our neighbor, as ourselves. Black young adults who are living oppressive lifestyle are looking to us for direction and guidance. If God shows love and compassion for a nation after sin and breaking His covenant, as Christian we should provide care to one another, especially our youth and young adults. Many of these young adults live oppressive lifestyle which leads to spiritual disconnection, criminal injustice, mental health disorder, lack sense of direction, low marriage rate, unintended pregnancy, father absents from households, single parenting and poverty. Many young adults sometimes rise above the situation of their oppression by seeing life negatively. They very seldom receive any hopeful news, only disappointment, which may end in their actions of an oppressive lifestyle. For them, life eventually means taking the accountability to find the right answer to its crisis and fulfill the task which constantly beset them. For a while, the situation in which these young adults find themselves may have need of them to figure out their own fate which countless periods are negative.

In this doctoral thesis, the Introduction seeks to present the reader with encouragement and insight concerning black young adult's oppressive lifestyle while

engaging the church and community. The objective is to teach at risk youth and young adults by providing spiritual direction, improving education achievement and self-esteem, enabling them to take part in a confident manner in positive activities outside the walls of the church and school, improving their coping skills giving them the ability to overcome oppressive lifestyles, while preventing their involvement in the justice system of systematic oppression. Our strategic action is to engage these issues by proposing to develop a model of ministry beginning the work with teaching, preaching, guiding, inspiring, encouraging, and reinforcing behavior associated with parents to insure healthy relationships, marriages, parenting, love, nurturing, mentoring, discipline and the importance of a safe home.

This involves working with school officials concerning optional punishment that would not expel student from school. We also seek to develop an affiliation with law enforcement concerning alternative ways of dealing with trouble as well as working closely with the local courts for alternative sentencing. We will seek to make the case for healthy marriages which results in active church attendants, being economically better off, living longer, better health, where children fare better in education and less risky behaviors and less likely poverty.

Chapter One, The Ministry Focus, is my life story while highlighting my spiritual journey where I grew up with Christianity being the main focal point of my being. I was part of an active Christians family and community. I was raised in a rural area of Charleston County, South Carolina, in a lower middle-class neighborhood with some poverty, where schools were lacking many resources to achieving a great education, and unemployment was high. I was raised in a family of seven children with an extended

maternal family of aunts, uncles and cousins. The reader will learn also about the context of my local church in which I was baptized and educated in Christianity and my ministry journey beginning with my call to ministry by God to this present age.

Chapter Two address the Biblical Foundation that examines an Old Testament text that undergirds a biblical foundation for this project. Exodus 3:6-10 tells how the Israelites leave slavery in Egypt through the strength of Yahweh – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – who has chosen Israel as his people. Led by their prophet Moses, they journeyed through the wilderness to Mount Sinai where Yahweh promised them the land of Canaan in return for their faithfulness to His Covenant. This text examines the narrative of Yahweh and the deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage and oppression in Egypt by the Pharaoh and the Egyptian taskmasters through the prophet Moses. There is a correlation with African Americans and their history of slavery and mistreatment in America. This text is examined by biblical scholars in identifying the significance and understanding the importance of this text for the point it was written and what can be drawn from it that is useful for a time such as now. Christians are taught the responsibility to reach and help those who are in need. Therefore, there is a need for black young adults' liberation of systematic oppression and oppressive lifestyles. This chapter also examines the New Testament text Luke 4:18-19. This text addresses God mission and the mission which is to minister to the social, spiritual and physical development of all people. In Christ, there are durable riches and true righteousness acknowledging that all they have is owing to the grace of God. These are the least of the poor of this world. Jesus has been sent to heal the broken hearted under the influence of the spirit of God to proclaim liberty and deliverance to the captives to sin. Therefore,

Jesus opens the prison and set free, and opens their eyes and gives them spiritual sight. As Christians we are obligated to do the same.

Chapter Three addresses the Historical Foundation. It provides a historical narrative that reflects upon the spiritual and social journey and development of African Americans disparity through the years that affects their accountability to God, family and community. From a historical perspective, this chapter will address from pass to present, the lack of social and moral accountability, which clearly identifies with the inequality, systematic oppression and prejudice in America that leads to oppressive lifestyles of black young adults to God, family and community throughout history in America.

Chapter Four, the Theological Foundation, focuses on the important teachings and learnings of Gods words while discussing the importance of faith in believing and following Gods words. Theologians share their expertise on the subject of liberation through preaching, teaching, worshiping and pastoral care. In addition, this chapter highlights the importance of black theology of liberating of our young people which arises from identification with oppression of blacks in America, seeking to interpret the gospel of Jesus in the light of the black condition.

Chapter Five, the Theoretical Foundation, addresses the problem facing the black community with a prophetic call for liberation by examining contemporary approaches to black young adults' issues, focusing on the how to liberate black young adults from the chains of systematic oppression. The focus areas of oppression and the cry for liberation surrounding these areas are poor parenting, a spiritual disconnect, education disparity, substance abuse, mental health disorder, unintended pregnancy, unemployment, low



marriage rates, absent fathers, single parenting, poverty, criminal behavior, and incarceration.

Chapter Six, Project Analysis, gives details on the specifics of the project model: what it is, how it came into fruition, where it was held and for how long, who participated in it, what were the means of gathering and evaluating the data and a narrative of the outcome of the data. This unit also involves spelling out the participation of the professional associates and the context associates. Lastly, this unit provides my summary of learning for my involvement in the doctoral program as well as what I learned about myself in this process. It concludes by pointing out what recommendations I have for replicating the program.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **MINISTRY FOCUS**

I was born October 27, 1963 in Charleston, South Carolina, and grew up with Christianity being the main focal point of my being. My mother, Mable Legare Brown, and father, Horace Brown, served as the spiritual leaders in the home, church and community. As a result, I accepted Christ as my personal savior at a very young age based on the values and training of my parents.

I was raised up in St. Matthews African Methodist Episcopal Church on Johns Island, South Carolina, where I was indoctrinated into the Methodist culture. St. Mathews Church was a family-oriented church where my parents raised my siblings: Charles, Mary, Ann, John, Debra, and Earl. In addition, there was my extended maternal family of aunts, uncles and cousins. However, my father attended St. Stephens African Methodist Church on Johns Island, South Carolina where all of his extended biological family of uncles and cousins attended.

St. Matthews and St. Stephens were only five miles apart. My brothers and sisters and I all became members of St. Matthews. In essence, because my mother was the spiritual leader of the family and was almost never absent from church school or worship service and bible study, this taught me the values of family parenthood from a spiritual perspective. I grew up in the late 1960s through the early 1980s. The family members attended church almost every Sunday along with the extended family members as well.

The black church during this era played a large role within the African American family and the community of Johns Island, South Carolina. Most children benefitted from after school care programs, kindergarten programs, and free lunch summer programs, all of which were located at the church during this time period. St. Matthews African Methodist Episcopal Church was located in the rural area of Johns Island, South Carolina, approximately twenty miles from downtown Charleston, South Carolina.

Johns Island is divided into two sections: North and South Johns Island. St. Matthews was located on North Johns Island. The average family household consisted of two parents and seven siblings. The only work for teenage youth and many adults in the 1960s and early 1970s was working on the vegetable farms or packing sheds. During the late 1970s, Kiawah and Seabrook Island Resorts located at the south end of Johns Island were developed. These brought many good, stable careers and jobs to the Johns Island community.

St. Matthews African Methodist Episcopal Church was one of four black churches located on North Johns Island. St. Matthews was home to approximately 200 members made up of adults and children. St. Matthews and St. Stephens African Methodist Episcopal Church made up a circuit during this time period. Reverend Walter Jones was the pastor. On the first and third Sundays, Pastor Jones was at St. Matthews; and on the second and fourth Sundays, Pastor Jones was at St. Stephens. Every other fifth Sunday he was at St. Matthews. Whenever Pastor Jones was at St. Stephens, the local ministers conducted the worship service.

When Pastor Jones was at St. Stephens on Sunday mornings, everybody and their families still showed up at St. Matthews African Methodist Episcopal Church. I attended

church school and morning worship service every Sunday morning with my family. The church school superintendent, Mary Pinckney, and church school-teachers, Rev. Peter Brown and Rev. Michael, created the fondest memories of church school. Participation in these gatherings was memorable because I learned to pray, the Ten Commandments, the twelve disciples and the Twenty-Five Articles of Religion. In addition, I came to recognize and feel the moving of the Holy Spirit during morning worship service.

Those experiences allowed me to get to know and maintain a close connection to God, community and the church, while being encouraged to participate in all activities of youth ministries and community recreation. During worship service, I would watch and listen to the senior officers of the church, which included my mother, uncles, aunts and others. Often times, I would emulate the church leader like the elders, not realizing God was preparing me to be a leader one day. This experience reserved and equipped me with strong Christian family values, so that when the time and seasons came, I would be prepared to live and demonstrate.

There exists in St. Matthews African Methodist Episcopal Church a set of family moral values, faithfulness and trust in God, the church, and the community of one body of Christ. St. Matthews' members maintained a vital role to uphold its faithfulness and charisma. St. Matthews Church and its members hold dear the devotion to God to carry on by providing service to the Johns Island Community in youth recreation through Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts and sports activities, with a spin on Christian moral values, which indeed helped to shape my accountability to the community.

At an early age, my parents involved me in community recreational activities such as the Boy Scouts, football, basketball, and baseball, which ignited and fulfilled a vision

to compete as a child while feeling safe, loved, and celebrated through diversity. Having been raised in a Christian family with loving parents truly is to me God's plan for every childhood life.

After graduating high school, I joined the military. During my early tenure in the military, I strayed away from some Christian values through vices such as drinking, profanity and fornication. However, after serving three years in the military, I first retired in July 1985, and moved to New York to be near some older siblings and further digressed from the known Christian teachings. After finally reaching a crossroad in my life, I then decided to move back to Charleston, South Carolina, where I married Linda in December 1988, not long after which we had our first child, Brittany. During this time period, my father became very ill and passed away from lung cancer; it was then that I decided to revisit the church and begin to read the New Testament Bible and seek Jesus to reveal himself to me more clearly. As a result, I was transformed and returned to my Christian values. I then began to experience restoration and strong spiritual growth that led me to recommit myself to an active church life where I became a steward class leader and church school teacher in my local church. In June 1998, I accepted my calling to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Shortly during this season of spiritual prosperity in my life, I began to experience a strong reality of evil forces from my past due to bad choices. The evil forces were attempting to destroy my relationship with God, marriage, family and life. As time passed through this reality of darkness, I continued at times making some bad choices as evil continued to pursue me, though I continued to seek the Lord Jesus Christ. In April 1998, Linda and I had our second child, Brandon. During this period, my mother became ill and

died suddenly from an aneurysm. This was a major setback in my life, and with all the bad times I was already facing, this only made it worse. Gradually, by the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ and the support of my biological siblings, I was able to overcome my fears and evil strongholds in my life through seeking God by fasting and praying. Finally, after many years of spiritual struggles, God led me to a safe and peaceful place within myself.

### **Young Adulthood Life**

My young-adult life experience revealed to me that the Christian, family and community values that were instilled by my mother and father were beneficial in overcoming the struggles of life. It is truly a blessing to have been raised up with a relationship with God. As a person of faith, it is important to pass on a spiritual heritage that your kids can pass on to their kids for generations to come. Believers are essentially responsible for raising their children in a Christian way. Putting Christ first in your life, our children must see us consistently putting Christ first in everything we do, including giving our time and treasures on Sundays. In teaching our children holiness, people in the community should be able to notice that we demonstrate our belief in Jesus Christ. Making family a priority, our relationship with God comes first; our commitment to our family comes next; and our dedication to work and contribution to society is third. I faced multiple adversities during my young adult life that were very difficult to overcome, but with the upbringing of my parents' commitment to God, family and community, it empowered me to know who I am in Christ, which led me to be a God-fearing family man and productive citizen of society.

### **Journey in Higher Education**

My journey in higher education in ministry began at Allen University in Columbia, South Carolina, where I studied religion through Old and New Testament theology and African Methodist Episcopal Church history and polity. After five years of study, I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Religion in May 2007, after which I was ordained an Itinerant Deacon in the African Methodist Episcopal Church. I furthered my education at Payne Theological Seminary in Wilberforce, Ohio, with studies in black theology, liberation theology, and a focus on the relevance of marriage in the black family, where I graduated with a Master of Divinity Degree in 2011. Later, I was ordained an Itinerant Elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and shortly after was appointed pastor of Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church.

My concern for the young adults as a father of two is the lack of accountability to God, family and community. I have the honor and privilege of experiencing parenting from various perspectives: raising a boy and a girl as teenagers and, now, young adults. Having raised my children by the model in which my parents raised me, the end result has been good thus far. My daughter, Brittany, is a graduate from the School of Nursing at the University of South Carolina and is presently employed as a pediatric nurse at the Medical University of South Carolina. She is presently continuing her education at the Medical University of South Carolina to become a nurse practitioner. Further, she serves on the young adult choir and is a tither. My son, Brandon, was recently awarded a full athletic football scholarship at Wofford University, where he began in the fall of 2016. He is also engaged in the church and serves on the youth choir and as an acolyte. However, this is far from the norm for young adults within the black community. Instead,

we experience systematic oppression with little regard for moral values and accountability to God, family and community. As a result, we are experiencing high rates of gun and drug violence, high incarceration rates, poor education, overboard tattoos, high unemployment, fathers absent from the home, unintended pregnancies, single moms parenting in poverty, and very low marriage rates. Because of these and other young adults' challenges, I am answering the call to develop a model of ministry to combat and liberate these woes in return for healthy young adults with regard to morality, prosperity and accountability to God, family and community.

### **Context of Ministry**

My context of ministry provides existing programs in Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission with activities and special events in the winter, spring, and summer camps, which are designed to challenge, entertain, and inspire youth. They also focus on developing physical, social, and decision-making skills while promoting self-confidence, environmental awareness, and fun through a positive experience for young adults. In addition, there will be year-round outdoor sports activities that encourage long-term mentor-based relationships. Core value curriculum integrates outdoor experiential learning, character development, community services, value-based leadership development, social justice advocacy, and peer mentoring. In each of these programs, participants will be encouraged to transform in areas such as discipline, integrity, wisdom, compassion, and humility. However, there is a need for additional activities that have not existed in the Edisto Island community that I would like to establish from



Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church, which consist of Boy and Girl Scouts initiatives.

The Boy Scouts Youth Ministry will fill a much-needed void in the community. Boy Scouts of America (BSA) is one of the nation's largest and most prominent value-based youth development organizations. The BSA provides a program for young people to develop personal fitness. Activities include trips to Carolwinds Amusement Park, Board River Zoo, parks, bowling, ice skating, movies, health and fitness workshops and camping. For over a century, the BSA has helped educate future leaders of this country and builds character, trains them in the responsibilities of citizen participation, and develops them by combining educational activities and lifelong values with fun. The Boy Scouts of America believes that helping youth is a key to building a more conscientious, responsible, and productive society. Young men emerge from the ministry prepared for responsible adulthood and empowered with the principles taught by Jesus Christ.

Girl Scouts Youth Ministry views its programs as a means of outreach to young girls in the community. Girl scouting is one way to help girls learn and grow into responsible young women. The ministry's mission will be to help girls and young ladies develop strong values through respect of God, community, humanity, and self, in order to make ethical choices over their lifetime and build character and skills for success in the real world. Activities include trips to Carol Winds Amusement Park, Board River Zoo, parks, bowling, ice skating, movies, health and fitness workshops and camping. This ministry empowers Christian belief in God to lead our girls to Christ. The curriculum is designed to spiritually empower young women to lift up the name of Jesus in their actions and thoughts, in school, home, church and social outings.

These ministries will benefit the community by bringing boys and girls, parents and leaders in the community together outside the walls of the church. Through this ministry, we will strive to provide the spiritual and social foundations so that young people will succeed in all areas of their lives, have spiritual fellowship with those who would otherwise not see the light of Jesus Christ, and cultivate and develop knowledge, leadership training, accountability and responsibility for the community.

### **Present Context Weakness**

As pastor of Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church on Edisto Island, South Carolina, I witness several weaknesses within the ministry at Calvary. Some specific observation is that young adults lack moral accountability to God, family and community, by way of systematic oppression that develops in to drugs and alcohol dependency, sexual immorality, unintended pregnancy, difficulties in relationships, family breakdown, mental health challenges, education disparity, low marriage rates, and high unemployment within a post-modern society.

On Edisto Island, violent crime is on a scale of 50% in comparison to a national average of 41.4%. Violent crime is composed of four offenses: murder and non-negligent manslaughter, forcible rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Edisto Island property crime is on a scale of 60% in comparison to a national average of 43.5%. Property crimes consist of burglary, larceny-theft, motor vehicle theft, and arson. Theft-type offenses refer to the taking of money or property, but there is no force or threat of force against the victims.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Sperling's Best Places, "Crime," accessed March 15, 2016, [http://www.bestplaces.net/crime/zip-code/south\\_carolina/edisto\\_island/29438](http://www.bestplaces.net/crime/zip-code/south_carolina/edisto_island/29438).

Crime affects communities and government spending. Public funds are needed for police departments, prisons and jails, courts, and treatment programs, including the salaries of prosecutors, judges, public defenders, social workers, security guards, and probation officers. The amount of time spent by victims, offenders, their families, and juries during court trials also takes away from community productivity.<sup>2</sup> So by focusing our efforts toward raising our children to be accountable to society will benefit the entire community as a whole.

Unintended pregnancy can have significant, negative consequences for individual women, their families and society as a whole. In 2010, 50% of all pregnancies (42,000) in South Carolina were unintended. South Carolina's unintended pregnancy rate in 2010 was forty-six per 1,000 women aged fifteen to forty-four. Nationally, rates among the states ranged from a low of thirty-two per 1,000. The teen pregnancy rate in South Carolina was sixty-five per 1,000 women aged fifteen to nineteen in 2010. The national teen pregnancy rate was fifty-seven per 1,000, ranging from twenty-eight per 1,000. In 2010, 57% of unintended pregnancies in South Carolina resulted in births and 29% in abortions; the remainder resulted in miscarriages.<sup>3</sup>

Unintended pregnancy has serious consequences and often leads to abortion. Reducing unintended pregnancy would dramatically decrease the incidence of abortion. Although it is quite clear that abortion has few if any long-term negative consequences on a woman's medical or psychological well-being, it is nonetheless true that resolving an unintended pregnancy by abortion may be an emotionally difficult experience for a woman and others close to her. In particular, abortion providers, women, and their partners as well may find that abortion poses difficult moral or ethical problems; and there continues to be major political and social tensions, including violence and even murder, associated with abortion in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Crime and Punishment in America Reference Library, "Economic and Social Effects of Crime," accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.encyclopedia.com/article-1G2-3441000043/economic-and-social-effects.html>.

<sup>3</sup> Guttmacher Institute, "State Facts About Unintended Pregnancy: South Carolina," accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.guttmacher.org/statecenter/unintended-pregnancy/SC.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Institute of Medicine, *The Best Intentions: Unintended Pregnancy and the Well-Being of Children and Families*, eds. Sarah S. Brown and Leon Eisenberg (Washington, DC: National Academy Press, 1995), 80-81.

South Carolina teen drug and alcohol statistics indicate that approximately 34,000 (9.5%) of adolescents in South Carolina used an illicit drug in the past month; 21,000 (5.8%) used marijuana, and 19,000 (5.2%) used an illicit drug other than marijuana; 13,000 adolescent males and 13,000 adolescent females in South Carolina used pain relievers non-medically in the twelve months prior to the interview.<sup>5</sup> Further, 13.0% (47,000) of adolescents used alcohol in the past month. Unfortunately, youth that consistently abuse drugs experience a variety of challenges in life, which covers the span of their lives. The challenges include: “Academic difficulties, health-related problems, including mental health, poor peer relationships, and involvement with the juvenile justice system. Additionally, there are consequences for family members, the community, and the entire society.”<sup>6</sup>

The research reveals that African Americans are the least likely to marry, when they marry, they do so later and spend less time married than White Americans, and they are the least likely to stay married. Factors contributing to the marriage status of African Americans include structural, cultural, individual and interactive factors. Structural factors include the disparity in sex ratios between African American males and females and employment instability among African American males. Cultural factors include changing cultural trends such as marriage not being a prerequisite for sex, the independence of women, the shift from familism to individualism, cohabitation as an increasing option, and the promotion of the values of materialism and patriarchy through popular culture. Individual factors stem from an internalization of cultural values that affects people’s perceptions of marriage and their expectations of potential mates, their willingness to commit to a relationship that can lead to marriage, and, once they marry, their willingness to sustain the marriage through the challenges it will face. Added to this is the fact that, until recent federal funding in 2006, there was little or no education to help couples sustain relationships to marriage or sustain the marriage after they are married. In addition, all members of US society are expected to conform to the dominant group’s idea of the monogamous, nuclear

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<sup>5</sup> “South Carolina Teen Drug Rehab,” Inspirations for Youth and Families, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.inspirationsyouth.com/find-state/south-carolina-teen-drug-rehab/>.

<sup>6</sup> Ann H. Crowe, *Drug Identification and Testing in the Juvenile Justice System* (Washington, DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, 1998), 4.

family. This forces those who opt for other life styles e.g., gay and lesbian, polygynous, etc., to stay in cohabitating relationships. All of these factors contribute to African Americans being less likely to marry and more likely to divorce. However, most achieve this status through their marital status. In fact, for many African Americans, success is achieved through marriage rather than education.<sup>7</sup>

In evaluating the statistics African American women are less likely to marry than other American women.

In 2010, 48.8% of Black men are 'never married' compared to 45.2% of black women which is up from 44% in 2008 and 42.7% in 2005. It is also believed that a large percentage of Black men marry White women. This is cited as the cause of low marriage rates among Black women. This however is only partially true. While Black men marry white women at twice the rate of Black women, only 7% of married Black men had White (non-Hispanic) spouses in 2014. About 14% percent of African American men married non-Black or Hispanic women in 2014. It is Asian women who have the highest rates of intermarriage which is twice that of Black men. Black women were the least likely to marry non-Black or Hispanic men at only 6% in 2014, and only 4% were married to White men.<sup>8</sup>

In 2012, the U.S. Census Bureau released a report that focused on the study of marriage in the United States and the report indicated that, "African Americans at the age of thirty-five and older were more likely to be married than White Americans from 1890 until sometime around the 1960s."<sup>9</sup> Further, the change in marital statistics changed in the 1980s and the number of never of married African Americans to 10% to more than 25% by 2010.<sup>10</sup> However, the number of white women remained below 10% and just over 10% for White men. "In addition, Black men aligns with the incarceration numbers

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<sup>7</sup> Patricia Dixon, "Marriage Among African Americans: What Does the Research Reveal?" *Journal of African American Studies* 13, no. 1 (March 2009): 29-46.

<sup>8</sup> "Marriage in Black America," BlackDemographics.com, accessed April 25, 2016 <http://blackdemographics.com/households/marriage-in-black-america/>.

<sup>9</sup> "Marriage in Black America," BlackDemographics.com, accessed April 25, 2016 <http://blackdemographics.com/households/marriage-in-black-america/>.

<sup>10</sup> "Marriage in Black America," BlackDemographics.com, accessed April 25, 2016 <http://blackdemographics.com/households/marriage-in-black-america/>.

which also experienced an abnormal climb beginning in 1980. This does not prove causation; however, it shows that they are related due to the assumption that men in prison are less likely to marry.”<sup>11</sup>

“South Carolina has the second lowest African American unemployment rate in the nation, led only by Virginia. In the third quarter of 2014, the African American unemployment rate in South Carolina was 8.7%. The white unemployment rate was 5.3%.”<sup>12</sup>

African Americans live in communities that lack access to good jobs and good schools and suffer from high crime rates. African American young adults are about twice as likely to be unemployed as White Americans. Black students lag behind their white peers in educational attainment and achievement, and African American communities tend to have higher than average crime rates. These issues have been persistent problem in relation to high unemployment in the black community. Jobs are essential to improving African American communities. Increased employment would help people in these communities lift themselves out of poverty. In addition, because poor economic conditions are an important causal factor behind poor educational outcomes and high crime rates are correlated with high unemployment rates. Creating job opportunities would help improve educational outcomes and reduce crime.<sup>13</sup>

My desire is to develop a model of ministry for liberating black young adults’ disparities in exchange for morality, prosperity, and accountability to God, family and community through improving these statistics. This will generate an accountability structure amongst the young adults through marriage and two-parent households. Young adults’

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<sup>11</sup> “Marriage in Black America,” BlackDemographics.com, accessed April 25, 2016 <http://blackdemographics.com/households/marriage-in-black-america/>.

<sup>12</sup> “News from EPI: South Carolina Has the Second Lowest African American Unemployment Rate,” Economic Policy Institute, accessed March 25, 2016, <http://www.epi.org/press/south-carolina-has-the-second-lowest-african-american-unemployment-rate/>.

<sup>13</sup> “A Jobs-Centered Approach to African American Community Development,” Economic Policy Institute, accessed March 15, 2016, <http://www.epi.org/publication/bp328-african-american-unemployment/>.

accountability to community will be strengthened through recreation, education, employment, paying fair taxes and being involved in healthy community activities. At St. Matthews African Methodist Episcopal Church of Johns Island, South Carolina, the youth members attended and served on various ministries in the church almost every Sunday when I was growing up. Most likely, the youth graduated from high school, gained higher education, served in the military, obtained gainful employment, paid taxes, engaged in marriage, raised their children in a two-parent household and were well respected in the community.

There is a great lack of morality, prosperity and accountability to God, family and community inconsistency in the number of young adults within the ministry context. This creates a problem and risk for youth and young adults' present and future development and growth of Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Edisto Island black community. In addition, Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church is located fifty miles outside of the Charleston, South Carolina area. The majority of jobs, housing, good grade schools, college universities, medical care, restaurants, shopping and entertainment are located in the Charleston area. As a result, over the years the young people left home to pursue higher education, military careers, jobs and better opportunities elsewhere, became conscious of the distance to Calvary from Charleston, and chose not to return to the Edisto Island community to live and share their resources.

As a consequence of the context weaknesses, I recommend to steer Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Edisto Island community in organizing a model of ministry that will reclaim and rekindle the young adults. In light of the shortcomings of ministry for this age group, this project will answer the struggles of

young adults' morality, prosperity, and accountability to God, family and the community. This project is expected to liberate and create a holiness and moral consciousness through spiritual revivals, drug and alcohol dependency programs, social programs and awareness outside the walls of the church. As an end result, young adults will have been set free to fulfilled tenets of spirituality, morality, prosperity, and accountability to God, family and community. The higher accountability to God will be displayed through worship service attendance and ministry participation. The increase in attendance and participation in ministry is needed for renewal of discipline and stewardship. Good morals will assist in good family values through marriage commitments and two-parent households, and in community accountability through education, gainful employment, paying taxes and community recreation activities. The entire congregation will be tasked with an effort to categorize the issues surrounding our young adults and ministry weaknesses in the Edisto Island community, and in return, focus on and contribute to ideas that will liberate and attract the young adults back to a good moral values and accountability to God, family, and community.

Our initial responsibility as a congregation will be to acknowledge that Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church has a challenge facing it. It is clear that the challenge is not unique to Calvary because other churches have some of the same challenges. We will demonstrate how those issues affect churches in our community, after thorough research and acceptance of the reality related to our weakness. This project will also focus on developing and implementing a vision for the future, a vision that understands that present levels of ministry need to grow stronger through church image and outreach ministries that attract folks in the Edisto Island community. The vision will



be beneficial for all parties involved; it will give us new opportunities to express our love for one another, old members and new members, and through that expression, our love for the Lord our God.

Calvary will draft a model resolution to eliminate weakness. This research will be conducted from a series of members of the congregation. Those asked to take a part in this research will include the pastor, associate ministers, officers of various boards and auxiliaries, and other members, especially the young adult members in the church and community. In addition, this research will be approached with an open and thoughtful mind of communication, which is essential in addressing and resolving the issues of retaining the young adults' accountability to God, family, and the Edisto Island community.

Within the ministry there are multiple skills that will benefit the development of the program. The initial observation is general to pastors in that they are diversified due to their God-given strengths. As one of those whom the Lord has called, my strengths and skills are the abilities to preach, cast a vision, teach, care, work well with the young adults, and excel with administrative tasks.

These strengths and skills will certainly help the urgent call for young adults' liberation from systematic oppression throughout the future model development. The context has strong representations amongst the various boards and auxiliary officers in the church such as the steward, choirs, ushers, trustees, class leaders and stewardesses. Calvary's officers demonstrate great Christian leadership values and are committed through the love of God, faithfulness, trust and treasures within its congregation.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS**

#### **Introduction**

The content of this chapter includes the examination of an Old Testament text to develop a biblical foundation for the spiritual journey of this project. The Old Testament book of Exodus tells how the Israelites leave slavery in Egypt through the strength of Yahweh – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – who has chosen Israel as his people. Led by their prophet Moses, they journey through the wilderness to Mount Sinai where Yahweh promises them the Land of Canaan (the “Promised Land”) in return for their faithfulness. Israel enters into a covenant with Yahweh who gives them their laws and instruction to build the Tabernacle, the means by which God will come here from heaven and dwell with them and lead them in a holy war to possess the land, and then give them peace. Exodus 3:6-10 is the foundational text that will be used. It examines the narrative of Yahweh and the deliverance of the children of Israel from bondage and oppression in Egypt by the Pharaoh and the Egyptian taskmasters through the prophet Moses. There is a correlation with African Americans and their history of slavery and mistreatment in America. They see, by faith, God delivering them from the oppression and bondage of

the systematic oppression in America during slavery. Some even see Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and others as prophets leading them to some measure of freedom.<sup>1</sup>

The New Testament foundational scripture is Luke 4:18-19. In this text Luke addresses the poor in spiritual poverty with low and humble thought of themselves and of their own righteousness. Yet in Christ, there are durable riches and true righteousness acknowledging that all they have is owing to the grace of God. These are the least of the poor of this world, and they are poor in their intellectual capacity and have but a small degree of natural wisdom and knowledge. To these people, the gospel (glad tidings) is the love, grace, and mercy of God in Christ. It is the peace, pardon, righteous life and salvation by Christ. This content was preached by him and in so clear a manner and with such power and authority as never was before.

Jesus has been sent to heal the broken hearted under the influence of the spirit of God. Christ was sent to heal such persons by his own stripes by binding up their wounds, by the application of his blood to them, which is a sovereign balm for every wound, by the discoveries of pardoning grace to their souls, and by opening and applying the comfortable promises of the gospel by his spirit to them. Christ's work was to proclaim liberty to the captives to sin, Satan, and the law, from which there is only deliverance by him, who saves his people from their sins, and redeems them from the law. This involved the recovering of sight to the blind and setting at liberty them that are bruised. This work involves addressing those in prison to darkness and sins of the world. They are in prison

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<sup>1</sup> Wayne A. Meeks, ed., *The Harper Collins Study Bible Including Apocryphal Deuterocanonical Books, New Revised Standard Version* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2006), 88.

of the law and are blind and ignorant to their condition. Therefore, Jesus opens the prison and sets free, and opens their eyes and gives them spiritual sight.<sup>2</sup>

The biblical foundation of this project is undergirded by Exodus 3:6-10 and Luke 4:18-19. These two texts demonstrate the correlation, similarity and significance with regards to Yahweh and Jesus Christ in their outreach to the poor and oppressed people of Israel and African American community in America. These systematic chains of oppression have resulted in a lack of prosperity, commitment and accountability to God, family and community by many black young adults. The hope is that these passages will facilitate this project narrative by means of God's liberation of black young adults from the systematic oppression and bondage to a land flowing with milk and honey (equality, equal opportunities), enabling them to enjoy life's pleasures and prosperity while being committed and accountable to God, family and the community in which they live.<sup>3</sup>

### **Literary Element of the Text**

<sup>6</sup>Moreover He said, 'I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look upon God. <sup>7</sup>And the Lord said: 'I have surely seen the oppression of My people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters, for I know their sorrow. <sup>8</sup>So I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of Egyptians, and to bring them up from that land to a good and large land, to a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites and the Hittites and the Amorites and the Perizzites, and the Jebusites.<sup>9</sup> Now therefore, behold, the cry of the children of Israel has come to Me, and I have also seen the oppression with which the Egyptians oppress.<sup>10</sup> Come now, therefore, and I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.' (Ex 3:6-10.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Meeks, *The Harper Collins Study Bible*, 1769.

<sup>3</sup> Meeks, *The Harper Collins Study Bible*, 88.

<sup>4</sup> Meeks, *The Harper Collins Study Bible*, 88.

### **Exodus: The Book and Its Authorship**

The name Exodus, derived from Greek, refers to the first of the two central narrative events in the book and the liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian bondage. The other event is the Lord's covenant-forging revelation to Israel at Mount Sinai, and the laws and instruction that ensues from it complete the book. Exodus is a distinct book relating the story of Israel's formation as a people and its covenant with God. The second part of the story is dependent on the first: by redeeming the Israelites slaves from Egypt, the Lord earns the right to "enslave" them to himself by binding them to the covenant obligation.

By way of authorship, history and tradition have pointed to Moses as being the author of the book of Exodus, as well as that of Genesis, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The literary writing is prose. Yet, further scholarship of the last two centuries acknowledge that the writing of Exodus, though through the orbit of Moses' influence, comes about through a group of writers primarily known as the "priestly" writers, according to the scholar Walter Brueggeman.<sup>5</sup> The first five books of the Old Testament, which is part of the Hebrew Bible, and called the Pentateuch, is difficult to pinpoint a specific writer. Biblical scholarship has pointed to four primary groups of writers from this era: J for Jahveh writers, P for priestly writers, E for Elohist writers and D for Deuteronomic writers. Concerning the exact authorship, "There are so many unknown factors in the transition of material, however, that it is now considered difficult to be

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<sup>5</sup> Walter Brueggemann, "Exodus," in *The New Interpreter's Bible: A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. I, ed. Leander E. Keck, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1994), 681.

precise about such editorial work.”<sup>6</sup> Yet, much of the considered work of the book of Exodus comes from the P source with some J and E added.<sup>7</sup>

### *Covenant Law*

The covenant law issuing immediately or indirectly from the Sinai event makes up most of what follows Exodus in the Pentateuch. Moses has the people recommit themselves to the covenant before he dies (Deut 29-30). In the next generation, the Israelites twice reaffirm the covenant (Josh 4-5, 24), an act that will be expressly repeatedly only centuries later (2 Kgs 22-23), and again after the Babylonian exile (Neh 8-10). Precedent for renewing or restoring the covenant is set within Exodus itself following the golden calf incident.

Moreover, the rescue of Israel from Egypt serves as a paradigm of divine saving power within the Torah as well as among the words of the prophets and psalms. God is repeatedly implored to arise and save Israel from its present distress as God had in the past in the Exodus. Future redemption of Israel is typologically conceived as reinsertion of the Exodus as the foundational narrative of the Torah transformed from a one-time event to a recurring one.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> G.E. Wright, “Book of Exodus,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol 2., ed. George A. Buttrick, (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1986), 190-191.

<sup>7</sup> Wright, “Book of Exodus,” 190.

<sup>8</sup> Meeks, *The Harper Collins Study Bible*, 83-84.

### Historical Setting

It is difficult to trace an exact date of the composition of the book of Exodus or the time frame in which it refers. The first reference to Israel outside of the bible comes from the writings of an Egyptian pharaoh, Merneptah, whose reign is around 1220 BCE. W. F. Albright proposes a date of around 1440 as a round figure of the time of the Exodus though the book is believed to have been written much later.<sup>9</sup> The book of Exodus has much meaning for Israel beyond date and authorship. As for authorship, the book of Exodus is:

according to tradition, the ‘Second Book of Moses’ – i.e., the second book of the Pentateuch. This traditional formula refers not as Mosaic authorship but to the foundational character of the literature in relation to the unrivaled authority of Moses. The book of Exodus stands at the center of Israel’s normative faith tradition.<sup>10</sup>

The book of Exodus has a connection to the book that precedes it, Genesis, as well as the remaining three books in the Pentateuch: Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The connection of Exodus to Genesis is that the God known in Genesis is only in Exodus made fully known by name and that the text is insistent that the old promises of Genesis are still operative in Exodus – promises made at creation (Gen 1:28; Ex 1:7), and promises of the land to the ancestors (Gen 12:1). These are the driving force that causes God to be engaged on behalf of the slaves. Thus, the connection between the two pieces of literature is promissory (theological rather than historical).<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Wright, “Book of Exodus,” 190.

<sup>10</sup> Brueggemann, “Exodus,” 677.

<sup>11</sup> Brueggemann, “Exodus,” 677.

As for the historical setting of the book of Exodus, again, it is difficult to ascertain. W. F. Albright's work, *From the Stone Age to Christianity*, places the date in the late Bronze Age.<sup>12</sup> The book of Exodus is critical to understanding the Jewish faith and tradition as it highlights the departure of a group of people from bondage in Israel through deliverance.

The tradition of Israel as preserved in historical, legal, prophetic, and cultic materials, however, all point to the exodus and wilderness periods of the nation's life for the foundation of the faith. All tribal groups of later Israel thus came to accept the traditions of this period as normative. The origins of Yahwism are traced to the Mosaic era, which in some sense must be reckoned as Israel's creative period. While in itself this period is difficult to reconstruct historically.<sup>13</sup>

So Exodus is the book that tells the story of Israel's departure from Egypt under the hand of God wherein Moses is the leader.

### *Moses*

Moses played a leadership role in the founding of Israel as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Ex 19:6). Indeed, the narrative of Exodus through Deuteronomy is the story of God using Moses to found the nation of Israel. It begins with an account of his birth (Exodus 2) and ends with an account of his death (Deut 34). Moses' influence and importance extend well beyond his lifetime, as later Scripture demonstrates. The book of Genesis prepares the way for the story of Moses and the founding of Israel. After recounting the creation of the world and the fall into sin, the book eventually describes God's choice of Abraham as the one whose descendants he will make "a great nation"

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<sup>12</sup> Wright, "Book of Exodus," 191.

<sup>13</sup> Wright, "Book of Exodus," 191.



and bring a blessing to the world (Gen 12:1-3). However, by the end of Genesis, Abraham's descendants have gone to Egypt in order to survive a devastating famine. Although they are in a good relationship with the Egyptians government, the hope is expressed that God will eventually return them to the land of promise (Gen 50:24-26).

Many years pass between the close of the book of Genesis and the beginning of Exodus. The Israelites population has grown from family size (about seventy people) to nation size. Out of fear, the Egyptian had begun to oppress them. Indeed, the size of the Israelite population so worried them that Pharaoh instituted a decree calling for the death of all male babies born to the Israelites."

Moses was born in a dangerous time and according to Pharaoh's decree, he should not have survived long after his birth. He was born to Amram and Jochebed (Ex 6:20). Circumventing Pharaoh's decree, Jochebed placed the infant Moses in a reed basket and floated him down the river. God guided the basket down the river and into the presence of none other than Pharaoh's daughter (Ex 2:5-6), who at the urging of Moses sister, hired Jochebed to take care of the child. The amazing story of Moses' survival at birth informs later Israel that their savoir was really provided by their divine savior.

Moses' later defense of an Israelite worker, who was being beaten by an Egyptian (Ex 2:11-25), led to Moses killing the Egyptian. So, when it became clear he was the known killer and would be punish, he fled Egypt and ended up in Midian. Whereas, he became a member of a Midianites family by marrying Jethro's daughter, Zipporah. Although Moses was not looking for a way out into Egypt, God had different plans. One

day while Moses was tending his sheep, God appeared to him in the form of a burning bush and commissioned him to go back to Egypt and lead his people to freedom.<sup>14</sup>

*Exodus 3:6-10*

This text in which Moses is instructed to go to Egypt and challenge Pharaoh to release the people from bondage had as its antecedent God's promise to Abraham and his seeds and the agony of a people crying out to God while suffering (Ex 2:23-25). Moses, having left – or driven from – the honors of Egypt finds himself in the desert of Horeb and has a religious experience. He sees a bush that is burning but not consumed. A voice, an angel of the Lord, speaks to him and instructs him of his charge to lead the people from bondage to freedom. “The vision that is said to have appeared to Moses in the desert is sometimes called an angel, sometimes the Lord. It means this: he is called angel when he served by speaking externally, and Lord, because he ruled within and produced the conditions needed for speaking.”<sup>15</sup>

*Vs 6*

In this verse God names or gives a description of him as “the God of Abraham, the God of Issacs, and the God of Jacob.” (NRSV).

We are quickly put on notice that this narrative concerns no ordinary happening, and we must not expect to understand it through our usual categories. The narrative features an angel (messenger), a bush that burns but is not burned, and

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<sup>14</sup> Longman, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1175-1176.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas C. Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy*, Vol III (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 10-11.

God's own voice. At the outset, we do well to recognize that this narrative is of a peculiar genre, a vehicle for the appearance of God's presence.<sup>16</sup>

This event is called a theophany (i.e. appearance of God). This theophany has two basic parts. First, the burning bush is to get Moses' attention. Second, the speech of a sovereign summons. "This is the first hint we have that the life of Moses has a theological dimension, for the categories of his existence until now have been political."<sup>17</sup> This passage is of importance not only in the miracle of the burning bush and the theophany of God's presence and voice but also in how the book of Exodus is connected to the book of Genesis in how the voice begins by saying "I am the God of your father." These three patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – consume much of the book of Genesis and in these persons the nation that was to become Israel was prefigured.<sup>18</sup>

#### *Vs 7*

This seventh verse of this text again has God in conversation about what is in God's mind. The theophany continues and demonstrates what has previously been recorded in Exodus 2:24-25.

These are the three actions that God characteristically takes toward Israel, or Israel is the object of God's intensive attentiveness. [God speaks,] 'I have seen . . . I have heard . . . I have known.'<sup>19</sup>

God speaks of having heard the cries of the people, the cruelty visited upon them by their taskmaster and the subsequent suffering.

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<sup>16</sup> Brueggemann, "Exodus," 711.

<sup>17</sup> Brueggemann, "Exodus," 712.

<sup>18</sup> Oden, *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture*, 16.

<sup>19</sup> Brueggemann, "Exodus," 712.

Vs 8

As God continues to speak to Moses through the burning bush, promises are made to the suffering descendants of Abraham in that God would lead them to a land flowing with milk and honey. Hence, this deliverance will be fulfilled in abundance.

The land of Canaan is described as a land ‘flowing with milk and honey.’ This refers to the bounty of the land for a pastoral lifestyle, but not necessarily in terms of agriculture.<sup>20</sup>

In every way, the new land is a contrast to the present land of oppression and bondage.

The new land that God now promises is ‘good.’ It is filled with the power of blessing rather than curse, broad and nonrestrictive rather than confining like the place of the slaves, and filled with plenty, rather than the close rations that must have been the lot of slaves.<sup>21</sup>

These contrast for the people of the Exodus of life in Egypt to that of the Promised Land called Canaan was to indeed be a great blessing.

Vs 9

The theme of having heard their cry appears again having once appeared in verse 7. The word of suffering is not used here, but the work of the Egyptians in oppressing the Israelites is spoken of by God. This passage speaks of God’s awareness of the situation. “God knows Israel’s present circumstance and is prepared to counter it decisively.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews and Mark W. Chavalas, editors, *The Intersity Press Bible Background Commentary Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: The InterVarsity Press, 2000), 79.

<sup>21</sup> Brueggemann, “Exodus,” 713.

<sup>22</sup> Brueggemann, “Exodus,” 713.

*Vs 10*

“So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt.” In this statement there is a radical break which must have stunned Moses when he heard it.

In this theophany, God moves from words of promise to the imperative, the command to Moses: “Come.”

It is Moses who will do what Yahweh said, and Moses who will run the risks that Yahweh seemed ready to take. The connection of God and Moses, of heaven and earth, of great power and dangerous strategy, is all carried in the statement ‘I will send you.’<sup>23</sup>

At the center of the Hebrew religious tradition and the Christian faith is this theophany of God speaking and inserting self in the drama of human history in the salvific measure of not only deliverance of a people from bondage but also the promises of caring for and providing provision for this people.

### **Word Study**

#### *(God of the Fathers) Theophany*

Moses’ experience at the burning bush is described biblically and theologically as a theophany where in God communicates with humankind.

Moses’ experience as a theophanic encounter, the God who is manifesting himself is also identified with equal precision. That such an identification should be thought necessary indicates not so much the narrator’s acknowledgement that there was more than one possibility as it indicates their concern that there be no doubt in the reader’s mind about the identity of the God who spoke to Moses. Moses is told first that he is being addressed by ‘the God of his father.’ The word ‘father’ is pointedly singular despite the various (and unjustified) attempts to

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<sup>23</sup> Brueggemann, “Exodus,” 713.

make it plural. What Moses is told must therefore be understood as a means of connecting the speaking deity with the faith of Moses' family in Egypt.<sup>24</sup>

Moses is also told that this is the God of the three patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Again, we see the connection between the content/narrative of the book of Genesis with that of Exodus.

### *Oppression*

There are several words in this text that highlights the concern and intentions of Yahweh as it relates to bringing the people out of bondage. The word “oppression, in Hebrew is *lahas*. This word “finds its most important usage in the realm of ethical theology. Israelites were not to oppress foreigners or strangers (Ex 22:21). The etymology of the word in Arabic (*lahhasa*) means “to torture.”<sup>25</sup> Other words used similarly to oppression from this Hebrew stem means “privation, cause trouble or hardship.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> W. C. Kaiser (1999). 1106 ׀ ׀. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (electronic ed., p. 478). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>25</sup> W. C. Kaiser (1999). 1106 ׀ ׀. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (electronic ed., p. 478). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>26</sup> W. C. Kaiser (1999). 1106 ׀ ׀. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament (electronic ed., p. 478). Chicago: Moody Press.

*Vs 7*

As this theophany continues to Moses at the burning bush, “there is a review of the plight of the sons of Israel in Egypt. Yahweh states that he has watched the oppression of Israel for a long time and has heard the people’s cry of distress.”<sup>27</sup>

*Vs 8 “come down”*

The theophany continues with Yahweh speech addressing his intent to “come down” from the place of dwelling above the heavens to this place of his appearance to Moses, and he is about “to snatch” his people forth from the grip of Egyptian power. This verb usage means ‘to tear away from, to snatch forth, often in the Old Testament with overtones of violence in rescue.’<sup>28</sup> This place of promise will be different from their present place of restriction to a place of freedom “flowing with milk and honey.”

*Vs 10*

As the theophany comes to a close, Yahweh comes to the point of his address in that of the call of Moses to be his agent of deliverance. Moses is to go to Egypt, confront the pharaoh, and bring forth Yahweh’s people, specifically and poignantly called “the sons of Israel.”

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<sup>27</sup> W. C. Kaiser (1999). 1106 ך ן. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed., p. 478). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>28</sup> W. C. Kaiser (1999). 1106 ך ן. R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr., & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed., p. 478). Chicago: Moody Press.

### **Major Themes of the Text**

There are several themes, most of them major themes, in the narrative. One of the themes is that of “God as a deliverer.” This has political overtones in that it goes up against a nation of power, Egypt, in confronting it over cruel practices. Many of the liberation theological motifs sees this passage as paramount in theology and the nature of the church. Another theme is one of the acknowledgements of Yahweh (God) as a Father image. Though it is not spelled out, another theme is understood in the context of God’s covenantal promises made first to Abraham and to Isaac and Jacob.



### **The New Testament Text**

The New Testament scripture for the biblical foundation is Luke 4:18-19, and it reads,

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.<sup>29</sup>

### **Luke: The Book and Author**

The Gospel of Luke begins by presenting Jesus as a Savior accessible to all people. This Jesus not only transcends race and ethnicity but also wealth and poverty. Luke's Jesus confronts the rich so that rich and poor are given equal footing (6:24-26; 12:13-21; 16:1-13, 19-31). Women, the lame, the hungry, and those deemed "other" are brought to the forefront by Luke presenting Jesus as one of and for the oppressed. Lukan theology is grounded in a Jesus who comes not just to offer compassion to those who are wounded but to speak to the evil of those who wounded.

Lukan theology is congruent with African American "God talk" that emanates from and bears degrees of suffering and oppression. Just as African American faith is not solely a belief of and for spiritual development, but also a belief of and for social, political, and economic enhancement; so does Luke use faith to speak to the contextual reality of believing readers and imperialistic leaders. Faith is not simply for faith's sake, but for the holistic wellbeing of those who have such faith. African American followers

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<sup>29</sup> Meeks, *The Harper Collins Study Bible*, 1769.

of Jesus believe in a complete approach to finding God, and the Gospel of Luke as a document of African American faith aids in this approach.<sup>30</sup>

The author of the Gospel of Luke writes to community of Gentile believers and Roman officials. While exhorting believers, the gospel attempts to avert persecution and further political oppression. In order to communicate to audiences, those within and those without, Luke uses rhetoric of subversion or hidden/coded language. This cryptic literature, while opening the door for Gentile acceptance of Jesus Christ, uses subtly as it speaks against Roman control. The Gospel of Luke also speaks to African American spiritually, sociology and history.<sup>31</sup>

The author of Luke of the third gospel and the book of Acts is a coworker, loyal friend, and periodic companion of Paul during his missionary journeys. By profession, Luke is a medical doctor, although he was not an eyewitness of Jesus' earthly ministry (Luke 1:1-4). The usage of the pronoun "we" in some of his writings indicates that he was present for some of the events critical to the missionary expansion of the early church (Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28:16).

These books together contribute more than a quarter of the New Testament, more than any other writer. The Gospel of Luke has been traditionally known as the gospel that portrays Jesus as the perfect man who came to bring salvation to all humanity. By way of contrast, the word salvation does not appear in either the Gospel of Matthew or the

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<sup>30</sup> Brian K. Blount, *True to Our Native Land: An African American New Testament Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007,), 158

<sup>31</sup> Blount, *True to Our Native Land*, 158-159.

Gospel Mark. The author aptly summarizes the focus of the third gospel by stating: “For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”<sup>32</sup>

Traditionally, the Gospel of Luke is believed to have been written after both Matthew and Mark. Those who date Matthew and Mark in the 60 or 70 of the first century A.D. have tended to push the dating of Luke back to the 70s or 80s. Since Luke wrote both the third gospel and the book of Acts (Acts 1:1-3), it is relevant to consider the dating of both together.<sup>33</sup>

The third gospel is addressed to ‘most excellent Theophilus’ (Luke 1:3), about whom nothing else is known other than that he is also the recipient of the book of Acts (Act 1:1). The Greek name Theophilus means ‘lover of God’ or ‘friend of God’ and implies that he was a Gentile, probably Greek.<sup>34</sup>

The Gospel of Luke is a carefully researched (Luke 1:3), selective presentation of the person and life of Jesus Christ designed to strengthen the faith of believers and to challenge the misconception of unbelievers, especially those from Greek background. Its portrait of Jesus is well balanced, skillfully emphasizing his divinity and perfect humanity. Nearly sixty percent of the material in the gospel of Luke is unique. Thus, there is a significant amount Jesus’ life and teaching that readers of scripture would not know if the third gospel were not in the bible.<sup>35</sup> Notable among the larger distinctive portions are: (1) much of the material in Luke 1-2 about the births of John the Baptist and Jesus; (2) the only biblical material on Jesus’ childhood and pre-ministry adult life (2:40-52); (3) a genealogy for Jesus (3:23-38) that is significantly different from the one in

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<sup>32</sup> Longman, *The Baker Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, 1079-1080.

<sup>33</sup> *Holman Study Bible*, NKJV Edition (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2013), 1702

<sup>34</sup> *Holman Study Bible*, 1702

<sup>35</sup> *Holman Study Bible*, 1702-1703.

Matt. 1:1-17; (4) most of the “travelogue” section about Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51; 19:44); (5) a considerable different slant on the destruction of the temple (21:5-38) from the Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24-25 and Mark 13; and (6) fresh material on the post resurrection appearances (including that on the Emmaus Road), a distinctive statement of the Great Commission, and the only description in the gospel of Jesus’ ascension into heaven (Luke 24:13-53).<sup>36</sup>

Luke was a close friend and traveling companion of Paul, so he could interview the other disciples, had access to other historical accounts, and was an eyewitness to the birth and growth of the early church. His gospel and book of Acts are reliable, historical documents. Luke’s story begins with angels appearing to Zacharias and then Mary, telling them of the birth of their sons. From Zacharias and Elizabeth would come John the Baptist who would prepare the way for Christ, which Mary would conceive by the Holy Spirit and bear Jesus, the Son of God.

Luke gives us a glimpse of Jesus at the age of twelve discussing theology with the teachers of the law at the temple (Luke 2:41-52). The next event occurs eighteen years later when we read of John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness. Jesus came to John to be baptized before beginning his public ministry (Luke 3:1-18). At this point, Luke traces Jesus’ genealogy on his stepfather Joseph’s side, through David and Abraham back to Adam, underscoring his identity as the Son of Man.

After the temptation in the Judean wastelands (4:1-13), Jesus returned to Galilee and began to preach, teach, and heal (4:14-23:38). During this time, he solidified his group of twelve disciples, calling Peter, James, John (5:1-10), and Matthew (5:27-29).

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<sup>36</sup> *Holman Study Bible*, 1702-1703.

Later, Jesus commissioned the disciples and sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God. When they return, he revealed to them his mission, his true identity, and what it means to be his disciple (9:51-53), where he would be rejected, tried, and crucified. But Luke's gospel does not end in sadness. It concluded with the thrilling account of Jesus' resurrection from the dead, his appearances to the disciples, and his promise to send them forward.

### **Literary Element of Text**

The book known as the Gospel of Luke is part of a two-part volume of the book itself (the gospel) and the Acts of the Apostles. This is the only Gospel addressed to an individual whose name is Theophilus (Luke 1:3). There is debate among scholars as to the identity of Theophilus. The name is derived from two Greek words: *theos* for God and *philos* for love.<sup>37</sup> There are two main lines of thoughts about the authorship. Theophilus is a well-known and used name in antiquity and this could be some unknown individual. The other thought is that of putting these two terms together – *theos* and *philos* – which means lover of God. Hence, the book's name can be thought of being addressed to anyone who is a lover of God.<sup>38</sup>

As for the author of the Gospel of Luke, he was a Gentile and has the distinction of being the only non-Jew to have written a part of the New Testament.<sup>39</sup> He is identified

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<sup>37</sup> *The Wesley Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version. The Gospel According to Luke*, ed. Mary Catherine Dean (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2009), 1237.

<sup>38</sup> *The Wesley Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version*, 1237.

<sup>39</sup> William Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, rev. ed., The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1975), 1.

as an itinerant traveling companion of the Apostle Paul. He is mentioned in the last half of the book of Acts (16:11 – 28:31). One of Paul’s letters mentioned Luke as a doctor and friend (Col. 4”14). When read side by side, these two books:

Form our most important sources for understanding the history of earliest Christianity. The two books are held together by the theme of the plan of God. The history in these volumes relates how God acted in Jesus of Nazareth to bring peace and justice into the world and how God continued this same mission through the apostles whom Jesus chose.<sup>40</sup>

Each gospel narrative is written from a certain point of view relying heavily on symbolism. The emblem for Mark is “man.” The emblem for Matthew is a “lion.” The emblem for John is the “eagle.” The emblem for Luke is the “calf.” “The calf is the animal for sacrifice, and Luke saw in Jesus the sacrifice for all the world. In Luke above all, the barriers are broken down and Jesus is for Jew and Gentile, saint and sinner alike. He is the savior of the world.”<sup>41</sup>

There is a great literary value in the book of Luke. Tradition holds that Luke was also an artist and scholars sees some of the visual elements of art in Luke’s gospel. “His special tradition, however, is the theme of greatest interest on the critical side, for the artistry of his writing should not be allowed to conceal from us the wealth of the early tradition he records. There is doubtless a kind of film overshadowing his narratives.”<sup>42</sup> There is a charm that adds to the literary value of Luke’s gospel. He writes primarily for a Gentile audience. Though he uses the gospel of Mark as a source, he does not use many of the Hebrew words for Calvary and Rabbi for instances. He uses these words Greek

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<sup>40</sup> *The Wesley Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version*, 1237.

<sup>41</sup> Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, 2.

<sup>42</sup> V. Taylor, “The Gospel of Luke,” in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, K-Q, ed., George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 187.

equivalent in that the Gentile audience (or reader) could understand better. Luke also, as does an artist, take great pains to excel in being a story teller. This is seen in his parable narratives. Also of importance is that Luke's gospel is one where women, sinners/outcast and foreigners are given significant attention. Another element of Luke's literary value is that of Jesus being a man given to prayer.

### **Historical Setting of Text**

The historical setting of the book of Luke is during a time of Roman occupation of Canaan. The city-state known as Rome became an enormous power in what is commonly called today as the Middle East. Under the might of its military, Rome took control of what is referred to in scholarly circles as Syria-Palestine in 63 B C.

They [Rome] gave limited autonomy to significant portions of Judean-occupied lands. The temple-state remained in control of Judea and Galilee under the leadership of Hyrcanus. The priestly aristocrats became subjects of the Roman Empire under the leadership of Herod the Great's father, Antipater. In 37 B C, Rome installed Herod as a client king – a new class of citizen for the Jewish people.<sup>43</sup>

Hence the historical landscape of Jesus' homeland was under the control of Rome with its appointed officials in limited leadership positions.

The complex of political, social military, social and cultural forces which controlled the Mediterranean world and Western Europe from ca. 30 B. C. to the fifth century A. D. Christianity arose within the Empire and developed primarily within its confines, being recognized as the religion of the state in the fourth century.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Crabbe, *Judaism from Cyrus to Hadrian*, 2:343, *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, Logos

<sup>44</sup> R. M. Grant, "Roman Empire," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, R-Z, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 103.

It is with this understanding that Jesus lived during this period and Christianity was birth against this backdrop.

Luke, the writer, acknowledges that he was not an eye witness to Jesus' ministry; yet, he acknowledges that from reliable sources he put forth some of the historical elements that were in place at the time of Jesus' ministry.

He [Luke] makes a solid attempt to relate Jesus to world history by mentioning the census of Augustus under Quirinius (2:1-2), by the chronological context of the appearance of John the Baptist (3:1-2), and by naming Roman emperors and officials (Acts 11:28; 18:2, 12).<sup>45</sup>

Luke, in both the gospel that bears his name and the book of Acts, connects Jesus not only with Judaism but also world history and church history. Though the gospel of Luke is not recorded purely as a historical document (nor Acts), it can nonetheless be argued that Luke the writer of a two-volume treatise can be viewed with a historical lens in the care that he used in punctuating his writings with times and persons also recorded in world history.

There are other historical markers of the gospel of Luke. Theophilus, to whom the book is addressed, is a Gentile, and so is Luke. So this gospel is called a gospel to the Gentiles. In addition to dating his writings to the reigning Roman emperor and governor of Syria, he also uses language that appeals to Gentiles more so than Jews. Luke is not interested in Jesus as the fulfilment of Jewish prophecy; rather, he points to Jesus' mission being to all humanity. Luke also has a habit of giving Hebrew words their Greek equivalent.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Edward P. Blair, *Abingdon Bible Handbook* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1975), 239

<sup>46</sup> Barclay, *The Gospel of Luke*, 3.



### **Cultural and Social Setting of Text**

As pointed out above, Jesus lived and his ministry took place against the backdrop of Roman occupation of Palestine (Galilee-Samaria-Judah). Little is known of Jesus' life after his birth in Bethlehem, his family's flight into Egypt fleeing Herod's death decree for infant boys and his appearance in the Temple for a festival at the age of twelve. There is no record of Jesus' life in Scripture until he reappears by the Sea of Galilee calling out to fishermen to follow him. The social setting in which his ministry took place was one of the so-called Promise Land being divided into three districts: Galilee to the north, Judea to the south and Samaria sandwiched between the two. Jesus' ministry took place primarily in Galilee. He made several trips, however, to Jerusalem (in Judea) for festivals.

Daily life for Jews in the time of Jesus consisted primarily of fishing and farming. There was, however, work for people with the skill sets of carpentry and iron work. Much of the industry of that day in the Galilee region consisted of fishing in that the sea of Galilee was a main source of commerce. Four of Jesus' disciples came from among this rank: Simon and Andrew (who were brothers) and James and John, also brothers. Another cultural element of Jesus' day was Samaria. Once a site where national shrines were built and a place where Jacob's well was located, Samaria had become, according to the purist among Judaism, estranged. The Jewish view of Samaritans was they were foreigners. The Samaritans view themselves as being remnants of Jewish forebearers who

had intermingled with other nations.<sup>47</sup> Jesus' encounter of the Samaritan woman at the well addresses some of the tension between the Jews and Samaritans.

As for the types of religious communities of Jesus' day, there were four: Pharisees, Sadducees, Essences and Zealots. The Pharisees' antecedent can be traced back to the time of Ezra.<sup>48</sup> This way of life took root in the Exile as people of faith, though separated from the land their forebearers loved, had taken with them the book of law. Hence, in the absence of a temple, the law had become their primary way of life.

The old hierocratic Israel, with the high priest as supreme authority in Israel, with the high priest as supreme authority in matters of law and religion, was re-established, but the law did not cease to be the soul of the nation.<sup>49</sup>

This Pharisee group was one that figured prominently in Jesus' ministry mostly in opposition to him. However, two Pharisees played prominent roles in his life: Nicodemus and Joseph or Arimathea.

Another group in Jesus' day was the Sadducees. It is commonly accepted that this group was derived from Solomon's priest Zadok, who became the father of the Jerusalem priesthood. This was a priestly, aristocratic party in Judaism whose interests centered in the temple and whose views and practices opposed those of the Pharisees.<sup>50</sup> This group too is mentioned several times in the gospel narratives. Another group that lived and practiced the faith during Jesus' day was the Essences. The Essences was a communal

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<sup>47</sup> T. H. Gaster, "Samaritans, in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 4, R-Z, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1962), 191.

<sup>48</sup> Matthew Black, "Pharisees," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 3, K-Q, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968), 75.

<sup>49</sup> Black, "Pharisees," 75.

<sup>50</sup> A. C. Sundberg, "Sadducees," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, K-Q, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968), 7160.

type group that lived simple ascetic lives that shared their resources. There were small communities of Essenes throughout Jewish communities. Some scholars believed that Jesus lived with this community for some time; however, this is more conjecture than fact.<sup>51</sup> The last major group during Jesus' day was the Zealots. This group of Jews in Jesus' day was a radical, warlike Jewish rebels against foreign, especially Roman, rule. "The Zealot gave himself over to God to be an agent of God's righteous wrath and judgment against idolatry, apostasy, and any transgression of the law which excited God's jealousy."<sup>52</sup> One of Jesus' disciples, Simon the Zealot, was among this group.

### **Major Themes of Text**

This text of Luke 4:16-20 is one that speaks volume to Jesus' ministry motif as well as the great care that Luke the evangelist went through in portraying Jesus' interest in the those who are poor and marginalized in the world. Attending the synagogue in Nazareth one Sabbath day on his return to the area, he was called on to read. The scroll that he read from was Isaiah 61:1. In his presentation of this event, Luke the writer embellishes this text.

Luke 4:18-20 bring together in modified form verses from the Septuagint (LXX) version of [Isaiah] 61:1 and 58:6. Once more, the reader is given indication that Luke has carefully chosen and arranged elements of this account in order to tell the story in a particular way and convey certain understandings to the reader.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> W. R. Farmer, "Essenes," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 2, E-J, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968), 143.

<sup>52</sup> W. R. Farmer, "Zealots," in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 4, R-Z, ed. George Arthur Buttrick (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1968), 936.

<sup>53</sup> R. Alan Culpepper, "Luke," in *The Interpreter's Bible, A Commentary in Twelve Volumes*, Vol. IXS, ed. Leander E. Keck (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 105.

There is also a parallel account of this text in Mark 6. This is key to understanding the work of Jesus in how Luke presents this to serve as an exemplary introduction to Jesus' ministry.<sup>54</sup> In these few verses we find the following motifs (themes): the anointing of the Spirit, the fulfillment of Scripture, the pattern of prophetic activities, the announcement of the gospel "to the Jew first," a specific illustration of acceptance being followed by rejection, and a dramatic reminder that the work of God that began in Galilee would extend to "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).<sup>55</sup>

Vs. 18.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free." Referencing texts from Isaiah 61 and 58, this speaks to the significance of Jesus' work as revealed in the prophecy of Isaiah as being the anointed one of God sent to Israel. Jesus' work is directly tied to God's work. Though Jesus is not often spoken of as a prophet, he sees his work in the light of the beginning work of the prophets and reads from the prophets. The theme of good news is at the heart of the gospel, for the word itself points to this proclamation that we call the "gospel." Another prominent theme of this text is that of the care for the poor. Again, Luke the writer places heavy emphasis on God's care for the poor. This is seen throughout the gospel. Much of the poverty of that day, as is today, stems from corruption from people in civic and religious roles. Other themes of this text speak to "the captives, blind and

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<sup>54</sup> Culpepper, "Luke," 104.

<sup>55</sup> Culpepper, "Luke," 104.

oppressed). Numbered among the outlook of oppression are those in various forms of bondage and oppression: “economic (the poor), physical (the lame, the crippled), political (the condemned), and demonic. Forgiveness of sin, therefore, can also be seen as a form of release from bondage to iniquity (Acts 8:22-23).”<sup>56</sup>

Vs. 19

“To proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” This is connected with the Jewish faith idea of “Jubilee.” Leviticus 25 addresses the subject of Jubilee. Jubilee is “legislation that ‘‘following a series of seven sevens, the fiftieth year was to be a time when ‘you shall proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants’’” (Lev 25:10).<sup>57</sup> Jesus linked this Jubilee motif to his teachings that the Lord’s favor was operative and signaled that the time for liberation of the impoverished and oppressed had come.<sup>58</sup>

Vs. 20

“And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him.” Jesus insisted here that Isaiah’s prophecy was fulfilled in him “today.” “[Jesus] he announces that the centuries of waiting on God’s blessing have ended: ‘Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.’”<sup>59</sup> This did not sit well with many, and Jesus was literally run out of town.

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<sup>56</sup> Culpepper, “Luke,” 106.

<sup>57</sup> Culpepper, “Luke,” 106.

<sup>58</sup> Culpepper, “Luke,” 106.

<sup>59</sup> Culpepper, “Luke,” 106.

## Word Study

The “spirit of the Lord,” “anointed,” “good news,” “proclaim” and “oppression” are all notable words and expression worthy of delving into to see the significance of the etymology of each word and how it speaks to Jesus’ overall reading of the text. The phrase, “the Spirit of the Lord is upon me,” continues a thread that runs back through 4:14 and 4:1 to 3:22 where the spirit came down upon him [Jesus]. The Spirit is upon Jesus for the purpose of anointing. The word *anoint* (*ed, ing*) has its Hebrew antecedent in 𐤀𐤓𐤕 “to pour” as in oil. What is implied from this text is that God has poured into Jesus his Spirit that has equipped Jesus to do his work of ministry. This work of Jesus did not come by happenstance, but directly from God in the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah.<sup>60</sup> The Greek word for “spirit” is *pneuma*. It is defined as “a current of air, that is, breath or breeze,” by analogy or figuratively a spirit.<sup>61</sup> Hence the *wind* (Hebrew) and/or *breath* (Greek) is operative in Jesus as the Spirit falls on and anoints him for the ministry of the prophetic office.

Jesus in this synagogue reading highlights that God has anointed him with the spirit to “preach” to the poor. The English word “preach” comes from the Greek *euaggelizo* which means “to announce to declare and show glad tidings.” The English word “gospel” is tied to this same word preach (*euaggelizo*) and means “good news” or “glad tidings.”<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> The Abridge Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew English Lexicon of the Old Testament, Logos.

<sup>61</sup> *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*, “Spirit,” QuickVerse 8.0.0.

<sup>62</sup> *Strong’s Hebrew and Greek Dictionaries*, “Gospel,” QuickVerse 8.0.0.

As Luke the writer does throughout the gospel that bears his name, he points again to the poor. Jesus reads that he is to preach glad tidings to those who are “oppressed.” Some of the words that are used in English translations of the Bible are “bruised” or “distressed”. In the Hebrew, the rendering for “oppression” and “distressed” is *lahas*. This word was used in the Old Testament to deal with the treatment that Israel received from her enemies.<sup>63</sup> “(Oppressors. *Hiph. oppress, maltreat*, sq. acc., esp. of illtreatment of poor and weak, partic. of the נָכַר, the ‘stranger,’ sojourner, by the rich and powerful; of a foreign oppressor.<sup>64</sup>

### **The Acceptable Years of the Lord**

Luke 4:19: ends, “To proclaim the acceptable years of the Lord.” This was not a New Testament idea only. In Old Testament, Israel was delivered from slavery in Egypt, by the powerful hand of God. This freedom would have been impossible; but for God’s intervention. He heard their cry for deliverance and had delivered them. This was a reminder to the Israelites what He had done for them and of their need for them to rely on Him for their sustenance and security. God had instructed them through Moses to observe every seventh year as a Sabbath rest of the land, and every fiftieth year of jubilee or restoration. At this time, whoever had enslaved himself to pay off debts would be freed, and lands sold should be restored to the family. It was this “acceptable” year of the Lord

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<sup>63</sup> Kaiser, W. C. (1999). R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer Jr. & B. K. Waltke (Eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed., p. 478). Chicago: Moody Press.

<sup>64</sup> Whitaker, R., Brown, F., Driver, S. R. (Samuel R., & Briggs, C. A. (Charles A. (1906). *The Abridged Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament: from A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament by Francis Brown, S.R. Driver and Charles Briggs, based on the lexicon of Wilhelm Gesenius*. Boston; New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company.

to which Isaiah was referencing (Isaiah 61), except that his application was spiritual, and not material.<sup>65</sup>

When the Holy Spirit moved the prophet Isaiah to speak thus: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has sent Me to preach the gospel to the poor, He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captive and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable years of the Lord” (Isaiah 61:1-2), he spoke in prophetic terms, pointing to the One whom God would send to be our Liberator. When Jesus used those words in Luke 4:18-19, he spoke in fulfillment of that prophecy which God had proclaimed through Isaiah. Jesus said, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4: 21). Jesus was thus claiming to be that “liberator.” As it was impossible for the Israelites to deliver themselves physically from their slave master in Egypt, even so it is impossible for us today to deliver ourselves from our enslavement of systematic oppression in America. Just as they needed the intervention of the almighty God in order to be liberated, so do we need His intervention, if we are going to be liberated from the systematic oppression. The need of every person is to be free from chain bondage of any kind. God has made it possible for us to be free from sin by sending His Son Jesus Christ into the world to save us from sin.

Jesus came to let the world know that the God whom they had offended was willing to be reconciled to them, and to accept them upon new terms; that there was yet a way of making their services acceptable to him; that there is now a time of good will toward men. It alludes to the year of release, or that of Jubilee, which was an acceptable year to servants, who were then set at liberty to debt, against whom all actions then

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<sup>65</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, 1463-1464.



dropped; and to those who had mortgaged their land, for then they return to them again. On the other hand, Christ came to sound the jubilee trumpet; and blessed were they that heard the joyful sound (Ps. 89:15). It was an acceptable time, for it was a day of salvation. Christ came to be a great liberator; for he was sent to heal the broken-hearted, to comfort and cure afflicted consciences, to give peace to those that were trouble and humbled for sins, and under a dread of God's wrath against them for them, and to bring them to rest who were weary and heavy laden, under the burden of guilt and corruption. He came in God's name to discharge poor sinners that were debtors and prisoners to divine justice. The prophet Isaiah could but proclaim liberty; but Christ, as one having authority, as one that had power on earth to forgive sin, came to set at liberty.<sup>66</sup>

### **Conclusion**

I conclude this biblical foundation in reference to Black Young Adult Liberation: Breaking the Chains of Oppression, first from an Old Testament perspective reflecting on Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses with victory over oppression is certain because God has taken up the cause of the oppressed thus promising today what He promised to the people of Israel while they were yet slaves in Egypt. Because we know that we can trust the promise of God, we also know that the oppressed will be fully liberated. Indeed, their present struggle for liberation is God making real the promise to set them free.

From a New Testament prospective, I turn to the liberator Jesus of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Paul and Martin Luther King Jr. "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me To preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the

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<sup>66</sup> Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary*, 1463-1464.

brokenhearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable years of the Lord.”

(Luke 4:18-19).<sup>67</sup>

The Black religious experience in America has tradition that goes back to slavery. Black slaves rejected biblical tradition used to justify slavery such as the so-called curse of Ham (Gen 9:24-27), the story of Cain (Gen 4:1-16), and the saying that admonished slaves to be obedient to their earthly masters (Eph 6:5-8, Col 3:22-25, 1 Peter 18-25, 1 Tim 6:1-2, Titus 2:9-10, and Philemon). Instead, black young adults turn to the liberation motif they found in Exodus, prophets, and the gospels' portrayal of Jesus in solidarity with the poor and oppressed. Both the black church and black theology are products of that tradition. No experience can take precedence over the truth revealed in black people's struggle for full humanity. The same rule of faith should be used by all.

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<sup>67</sup> *The Harper Collins Study*. 1769.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **HISTORICAL FOUNDATIONS**

In this chapter, a historical narrative is provided, which reflects upon the spiritual and social journey and development of young adults' disparity through the years that affects their accountability to God, family and community. From a historical perspective, this chapter will address, from past to present, the lack of social and moral accountability, which clearly identifies the relevance for the decline of accountability in African American young adults to God, family and community through history. The historical foundations will explore five significant periods involving black young adults' oppression and bondage, leaving them unaccountable to God, family and community through slavery, abolitionist movement, emancipation and Civil War movement, Civil Rights movement, sexual revolution and marriage decline, late twentieth century war on drug and the history of the black church.

#### **Slavery**

Slavery in the United States is the granting of the power by which one-man exercise and enforces a right of property in the body and soul of another. The condition of a slave is simply that of the brute beast. He is a piece of property, a marketable commodity, in the language of the law, to be bought and sold at the will and caprice of the master who claims him to be his property; he is spoken of, thought of, and treated as

property. His own good, his conscience, his intellect, his affections, are all set aside by the master. The will and the wishes of the master are the law of the slave. He is as much a piece of property as a house. If he is fed, he is fed because he is property. If he is clothed, it is with a view to the increase of his value as property. Whatever of comfort is necessary to him for his body or soul that is inconsistent with his being property is carefully wrested from him, not only by public opinion, but by the law of the country, he is carefully deprived of everything that tends in the slightest degree to detract from his value as property. He is deprived of education. God has given him an intellect; the slaveholder declares it shall not be cultivated. If his moral perception leads him in a course contrary to his value as property, the slaveholder declares he shall not exercise it. The marriage institution cannot exist among slaves, and one sixth of the population of democratic American is denied its privileges by the law of the land. What is to be thought of a nation boasting of its liberty, boasting of its humanity, boasting of its Christianity, boasting of its love of justice and purity, and yet having within its own borders three million of persons denied by law the right of marriage, education? What must be the condition of that people?<sup>1</sup>

Slavery in America began in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century and continued to be practiced for the next 250 years by the colonies and states. Slaves, most from Africa, worked in the production of tobacco crops and later, cotton. With the invention of cotton gin in 1793 along with growing demand for the product in Europe, the use of slaves in the South became a foundation of their economy. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the abolitionist movement

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick Douglass, *Frederick Douglass on Slavery and the Civil War* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publication, Inc, 2003), 30.

began in the north and the country began to divide over the issue between North and South. The abolitionist movement was a social and political push for the immediate emancipation of all slaves and the end of racial discrimination and segregation.

Advocates for emancipation ranged from more moderate anti-slavery advocates that argued for gradual emancipation and free activists who sought to restrict slavery to existing areas and prevent its spread. Radical abolitionism was partly fueled by religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening, which prompted many people to advocate for emancipation on religious grounds. The abolitionist movement became increasingly prominent in Northern churches and politics beginning in the 1830s, which contributed to the regional animosity between North and South leading up to the Civil War.

In 1857, the Supreme Court decision known as the Dred Scott Decision concluded that Negroes were not citizens and had no rights of citizenship; therefore, slaves that escaped to free states were not free but remained the property of their owners and must be returned to them. The decision antagonized many Northerners and breathed new life into the floundering Abolition Movement.<sup>2</sup>

For more than two centuries slavery would test the ability of Africans in the Americas to sustain family ties. Children were sold away from their parents and husbands torn from wives. Many slaves tried in vain to retain bonds with family members dispersed across the country, but their efforts were often undermined by their legally mandated illiteracy, the inability to locate or maintain contact with loved ones, and society's overarching disregard for black family life.

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<sup>2</sup> "Slavery in America," accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.historynet.com/slavery-in-america>.

The legacy of slavery, followed by a century of legal segregation and discrimination, still resonates today as African American families are disproportionately beset by high levels of poverty, unemployment, out-of-wedlock birth, divorce, and male incarceration. In 1965, the *Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, a controversial report by U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor Daniel Patrick Moynihan, highlighted the growing number of African American female-headed homes and out of wedlock births, and an increasing reliance on welfare. According to the report, nearly twenty-three percent of black homes had absent fathers, compared with eight percent for whites. While divorce rates for blacks and whites were equal in 1940, by 1964 the rate for blacks was forty percent higher. Moynihan attributed many of the problems to legacy of slavery and discrimination, high black unemployment, and inferior education, but also to the destabilization of the black nuclear family and a federal welfare system that eclipsed the role of the black male.<sup>3</sup>

While findings in the report are widely condemned by some civil rights leaders, the report would compare favorably with the portrait of the black family at the dawn of the twenty-first century, when some seventy percent of black children are born out of wedlock, compared with twenty-three percent in 1964. And while nearly eighty percent of black families were headed by married couples in 1950, only forth-eight percent were in 2000. The disintegration of the nuclear family has had a profound impact on the economic wellbeing of African Americans.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Pamela Newkirk, *Letters from Black America* (New York, NY: Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2009), 3-4.

<sup>4</sup> Newkirk, *Letters from Black America*, 3-4.

Michael Eric Dyson stated,

I think one defining issues has to be tension between memory and identity. We live what has been termed ‘the United States of Amnesia.’ When it comes to race and ethnicity in American society, our inability to acknowledge the social context and the political context that frame debates about what’s happening now. We see this in popular culture with issues over slavery as to what degree was the slave past so significant that it continues to cast a long shadow over American life. The recent brouhaha over Thomas Jefferson and now DNA proves, alas, what people of color, and it had a significant impact upon the construction of American material and social life. And the way relates to identity then is that there has been an enormous array of contests over how we define ourselves as American. So the tension between what we have come from and what we are now, continues to express itself, I think, with lethal intensity with ferocity that is indexed in the following that people simply keep asking the question. But until we wrestle with those demons of racism that have shaped and framed us, we will scarcely be able to embrace the full measure of our humanity as citizen in American society. Those demons that have shaped us and framed us is, the ill treatment of slavery that brutally up rooted African from their country of Africa and inhumanly brought to America for cheap labor to establishing American economy.<sup>5</sup>

In these trying circumstances, the black revolution is much more than a struggling the evil that are rooted deeply in the whole structure of our society for the rights of African American. It is forcing American to face all its interrelated flaws of racism, poverty, militarism, and materialism. It is exposing the evils that are rooted deeply in the whole structure of our society. It reveals systemic rather than superficial flaws and suggests that radical reconstruction of society itself is the real issue to be faced.

It should go without saying that police murder and brutality are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the US criminal justice system treatment of blacks. It is so clear that for the police that African Americans’ lives do not matter at all. In fact, it is important to understand the intense policing of black communities without putting it into

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<sup>5</sup> Michael Eric Dyson, *Debating Race with Michael Eric Dyson* (New York, NY: Basic Civitas Books, 2007), 4.

the wider context of the half a century old War on Drugs and the effects of mass incarceration.

Today dissenters tell the complacent majority that the time has come when further evasion of social responsibility in a turbulent world will court disaster and death. America has not yet changed because so many think it need not change, but the illusion of the demand. American must change because twenty-three million black citizens will no longer live supinely in a wretched undone past. They have left the valley of despair; they have found strength in struggle. Joined by white allies, they will shake the prison walls until the fall. American must change.<sup>6</sup>

### **Abolition Movement**

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the abolitionist movement began in the north and the country began to divide over the issue between North and South. The abolitionist movement was a social and political push for the immediate emancipation of all slaves and the end of racial discrimination and segregation. Radical abolitionism was partly fueled by religious fervor of the Second Great Awakening which prompted many people to advocate for emancipation on religious ground. The Second Great Awakening was a religious revival that occurred in the United States beginning in the late eighteenth century and lasting until the middle of the nineteenth century. The awakening was unique in that it moved beyond the educated elite of New England to those who were less wealthy and less education. The core of the evangelicalism was the experience of dominants form of

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<sup>6</sup> Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, *From #Black Lives Matter To Black Liberation* (Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2016), 1.



spiritual expression and conversion. The abolitionist movement became increasing prominent in Northern churches and politics beginning in the 1830s, which contributed to the regional animosity between North and South leading up to the Civil War.

Abolitionists sought to establish the conviction throughout that country that slavery is a sin and ought to be treated as such by all professing Christian. The convictions they have written about, they have spoken about, they have published about, they have used all the ordinary facilities for forwarding this view of the question of slavery. Previously, slavery was not regarded as a sin. It was spoken of as an evil and in some cases it was spoken of as a wrong; in some cases it was spoken of as an excellent institution and it was nowhere, or scarcely anywhere, counted as a sin, or treated as a sin, except by the Society of Friends, and by the Reformed Presbyterians, two small bodies of Christian in the United States. Abolitionists, for advocating or attempting to show that slavery holding is a sin, have been called incendiaries and madmen, and they have been treated as such only much worse, in many instances; for they were mobbed, beaten, pelted, and defamed in every possible way, because they disclaimed the idea that slavery is not a sin, a sin against God, a violation of the right of man, a sin demanding the immediate repentance on the part of the slaveholder. They had called upon the religious organization of the land to treat slaveholding as sin. They had recommended that the slaveholder should receive the same treatment from the church that is meted out to the ordinary thief. They had demanded his exclusion from the churches, and some of the largest denominations in the country had separated at Mason and Dixon's line, dividing the free states from the slave states, solely on account of slave holding, as those who hold

anti-slavery views felt that they could not stand in fellowship with men who trade in bodies and souls of their fellowmen.<sup>7</sup>

### **Emancipation and Civil War Movement**

Emancipation and Civil War Movement began during the election of Abraham Lincoln, a member of the anti-slavery Republican Party, to the presidency in 1860. Many Southerners were convinced that slavery would never be permitted to expand into new territories acquired by the United States and might ultimately be abolished. Eleven Southern states attempted to secede from the Union precipitating the Civil War. South Carolina was one of them whereas the Edisto Island Community resides in the state of South Carolina. During the war, Abraham Lincoln issued his famous Emancipation Proclamation, freeing slaves in all areas of the country that were at that time rebelling. This measure helped prevent European intervention on the side of the South and freed Union army and navy officers from returning escaped slaves to their owners, but not until after the Union had won the war and the subsequent passage of the Thirteenth Amendment to the Constitution were the American slaves officially freed.<sup>8</sup>

Frederick Douglass, addressing the subject of the war wrote,

To our mind, there is but one easy short and effectual way to suppress and put down the desolating war which the slaveholders and their rebel minions are now waging against the American Government and its loyal citizen. Fire must be met with water, darkness with light, and war for the destruction of liberty must be met with war for the destruction of slavery. The simple way then to put an end to the savage and desolating war now waged by the slave holders, is to strike down slavery itself, the primal cause of that war. Freedom to the slave should now be proclaimed from the Capital and should be above the smoke and fire of every

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<sup>7</sup> Douglass, *Frederick Douglass on Slavery and the Civil War*, 38-39.

<sup>8</sup> "Slavery in America," accessed April 24, 2017, <http://www.historynet.com/slavery-in-america>.

battle field, waving from every battle field waving from every flag... Let the slaves and free colored people be called into service, and formed into a liberation army, to march into the south and raise the banner of Emancipation among the slaves. One black regiment alone would be in such a war, the full equal of two white ones. The very fact of color in this case would be more terrible than powder and balls. The slave would learn more as to the nature of the conflict from the presence of one regiment, then from thousands of preachers. Every consideration of justice, humanity and sound policy confirm the wisdom of calling upon black men. If not for this policy change, then the slaves would still be slaves and that the master still masters. When the slaves master warn that if any attempt was made by them to gain their freedom it would be suppressed with an iron hand, when the government persistently refused to employ Negro troops. When slaves were being returned from our lines to their masters, when union soldiers were stationed about the farm house of Virginia to guard and protect the master in holding his slaves. When the Union soldiers made themselves more active in kicking Negro men out of their camps than in shooting rebels, when even Mr. Lincoln could tell the poor Negro that he was the cause of the war, I still believed, and spoke as I believed, all over the North, that the mission of the war was the liberation of the slave, as well as the salvation of the Union.<sup>9</sup>

Douglass continued, “Hence from the first I reproached the North that they fought the rebels with only one hand, when they might strike effectually with two, that they fought with their soft white hand, while they kept their black iron hand chained and helpless behind them, that they fought the effect, while they protected the cause, and that the Union cause would never prosper till the war assumed an Anti-Slavery attitude, and the Negro was enlisted on the loyal aside.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Civil Rights Movement**

Long before the Civil Rights movement officially emerged in the United States during 1950s and 1960s, African Americans struggled to be free, to achieve equality, and for their rights. There is no way to say for sure when the first cry was raised, particularly

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<sup>9</sup> Douglass, *Frederick Douglass on Slavery and the Civil War*, 43-44.

<sup>10</sup> Douglass, *Frederick Douglass on Slavery and the Civil War*, 43-44.

if by civil rights we also mean human rights. To this extent, the Africans who were snatched from their homelands during the Atlantic slave trade and found themselves captives in America certainly had their human rights brutally violated. The demand by African American for justice and equality can be traced to the Reconstruction era. And most directly to the passage of three amendments: the Thirteenth Amendment abolished slavery in 1865; the Fourteenth Amendment, adopted in 1868, affirmed black citizenship under the Constitution; and in 1870, the Fifteenth Amendment guaranteed blacks the right to vote. These three amendments provided the U.S. Congress with the power and authority to enact civil rights legislation. This was enough to strike fear in the hearts of many white southerners, who viewed this political change as “nigger domination” which brought forth a Ku Klux Klan rally in 1939.<sup>11</sup>

The Civil Rights Movement was characterized by major campaigns of civil resistance. Between 1955 and 1968, acts of nonviolent protest and civil disobedience produced crisis situations and productive dialogues between activists and government authorities. Federal, state and local governments, businesses, and communities often had to respond immediately to these situations, which highlighted the inequities faced by African Americans. The lynching of African Americans formed protest and civil disobedience including boycotts such as the successful Montgomery Bus Boycott in Alabama, sit-ins, marches such as the Selma to Montgomery march in 1965 in Alabama, and a wide range of other nonviolent activities. The Civil Act of 1964 expressly banned discrimination based on race, color, religion, sex, or national origin in employment

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<sup>11</sup> Herb Boyd, *We Shall Overcome, Narrated by Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee* (Naperville, IL: Sourcebooks, Inc. 2004), 1-4.

practices; ended unequal application racial segregation in schools, at the workplace and in public accommodations. In 1965, the Voting Rights Act restored and protected voting rights for minorities. The Fair Housing Act of 1968 banned discrimination in the sale or rental of housing. From 1964 through 1970 a wave of inner city riots in black community undercut support from the white community. The emergence of the Black Power Movement in 1965 challenged the black leadership movement established by such leaders as Martin Luther King Jr. for its cooperative attitude and its practice of nonviolence, instead demanding political and economic self-sufficiency to be built in the black community.

Martin Luther King Jr. grew up in the South during the days of the Jim Crow laws. The Jim Crow laws in states and local counties enforced racial segregation for use of public facilities and transportation in the southern part of the United States. This body of laws institutionalized a number of economic, education, and social disadvantages. African Americans were only able to work very low-paying jobs, and the unemployment rate was two and a half times higher than for white Americans. King vowed to dedicate his life to eradicating racism and intolerance. His fight for civil rights began with bus boycotts in 1955 when Rose Parks, an African American woman, was arrested for refusing to give up her seat on the bus to a white passenger. The Bus Boycott began in December 5, 1956 with the desegregation of the Montgomery bus system. In solidarity with Parks, many African American leaders, including King and members of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, took notice. The Southern Christian Leadership Conference, led by King and others such as Ralph David Abernathy, Andrew Young, Hosea Williams, John Lewis and John Reynolds, conducted series of nonviolent

demonstration to protest the unfair treatment of African Americans and defy laws they felt were unjust up until his assassination April 4, 1968.<sup>12</sup>

Glenn C. Loury states in the book *Empowerment Ethics*,

The great challenge facing black America today is the task of taking control of its own future by exerting the necessary leadership, making the required sacrifice, and building the needed institutions so that black social and economic development becomes a reality. No matter how windy the debate becomes among white liberals and conservatives as to what should be done, meeting this self-creating challenge ultimately depends on black action.<sup>13</sup>

With respect to freedom, rights, and responsibility, Loury believes that the legal struggle against racial discrimination has essentially been won, but it remains a challenge for black community to embrace the notion of civil responsibility. He states emphatically that, “no people can be genuinely free so long as they look to others for their deliverance.”<sup>14</sup> His vision of black progress is one of freedom, equality, and dignity, where the vicious cycle of poverty and dependency is brought to an end by the relentless pursuit of economic opportunity.

Keeping in mind the goal of constructing a sense of self-worth, care should be taken to separate the faults attributable to the oppressor from the responsibility that rests upon the shoulders of the oppressed:

Neither the guilt nor the pity of one’s oppressor is a sufficient basis upon which to construct a sense of self-worth. When faced with the ravages of black crime against blacks, the depressing nature of social life in many low-income black communities, the alarming incidence of pregnancy among unwed black teenagers, it is simply insufficient to respond by saying “This is the fault of racist America.

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<sup>12</sup> Rosa Boshier, *How to Analyze the Work of Martin Luther King Jr.* (North ManKato, MN: ABDO Publishing Company 2013), 13-15.

<sup>13</sup> Cherly J. Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People: A Path to African Social Transformation* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1995), 35.

<sup>14</sup> Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People*, 36.

These problems will be solved when America finally does right by its black folk.<sup>15</sup>

Such a response dodges the issue of responsibility, both at the level of individual behavior (the criminal perpetrator being responsible for his act), and at the level of the group (the black community being responsible for the values embraced by its people).<sup>16</sup>

### **Sexual Revolution Movement and Marriage Decline**

The Sexual Revolution was a social movement that challenged traditional codes of behavior related to sexuality and interpersonal relationships throughout the United States and subsequently, the wider world, from 1960s to the 1980s. Sexual liberation included increased acceptance of sex outside of traditional heterosexual, monogamous relationship. The normalization of contraception and the pill, public nudity, pornography, premarital sex, homosexuality, and alternative forms of sexuality, and the legalization of abortion all followed.

Within the past twenty years, a number of factors including those that are technological, economic, and psychosexual in nature, have gone into the formation of the present phenomenon we call the sexual revolution. In the technological sphere, a new sexual ethic was ushered in with the dramatic development of “the pill” in the early 1960s. Though one is tempted to credit the pill as key to change in sexual morality, the decision to develop and promote the pill was key factor, and that decision came from the highest levels of U.S. power structure, which sought to limit domestic and foreign

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<sup>15</sup> Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People*, 37.

<sup>16</sup> Sanders, *Empowerment Ethics for a Liberated People*, 36-37.

birthrates. The Western world's fear of the Third World population in Asia, South America and Africa, their growing resistance to imperialism and the problems of suppressing these populations as they grew made birth control an attractive solution. In the U.S., popularizing the pill presented a problem, for the sexual ease and spontaneity it offered would loosen traditional sexual morality and offend church and conservative groups. To solve this problem, a major media campaign was unleashed to transform traditional morality. In a reversal of value, the decision was made to present the propagation of large families as being socially irresponsible. Sex became a matter of consumption as well as expression and reproduction. Once the new ethic of limited birth was established, the exploitation uses of abortion and sterilization became possible.<sup>17</sup>

Harriett McAdoo states during the sexual revolution period of the 1960s and 1970s, attitudes changed toward the significance of marriage relationship and commitment to the family. The sexual and independent views of women change the economic process during this period disadvantaged the black family. Feminist discourse to self-expression and self-exposure that brought about alternative ways of viewing economic security, religious and social values, in turn affected healthy religious and Christian family structure.<sup>18</sup>

Jeffery Escoffies argues that the sexual revolution period was a period characterized by liberalization of tradition sexual values that was core in the history of the black family. The most significant changes in sexual attitudes that contributed to the moral sexuality change were the birth control pills, the abortion laws, and women's

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<sup>17</sup> Robert Chrisman, "The Critique of the Sexual Revolution," *Black Scholars* 43, no. 3 (Fall 2013):29, accessed April 26, 2017, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.5816/nlackscholar.43.3.0029>.

<sup>18</sup> Harriette Pipes McAdoo, *Black Families* (Los Angeles, California: Sage Publication, 2007), 7.



increasing economic independence which affected the family values and formation of the black family. The sexual revolution period sparked an era in society in which family moral values widely decreased and pleasure and self-exploration became a right rather than a privilege.<sup>19</sup>

Harriett McAdoo asserts, by the late twentieth century, historical evidence suggests that African American must return to their religious and Christian roots by way of strong commitment to marriage relationships. The family must be as in African culture the focal point of unity, meaning children, gender and generation. Interpersonal relationship within the black family is values which McAdoo summarized under the concept of the seven R's: respect, restraint, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, reason and reconciliation. She views the seven R's as the core values undergirding African American heritage.<sup>20</sup>

### **Late Twentieth Century War on Drugs**

Marc Mauer reported that in the New York Times, April 28, 1997, former President Jimmy Carter cited inequities in the criminal justice system that often penalize blacks and other minority group more than whites. He said that as a young Governor of Georgia, he and contemporaries like Reubin Askew in Florida and Dale Bumpers in Arkansas had "an intense competition" over who had the smallest prison population.

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<sup>19</sup> Jeffery Escoffies, *Sexual Revolution* (New York, NY: Thunder's Mouth Press, 2001), 4-8.

<sup>20</sup> McAdoo, *Black Families*, 14, 38-40.

“Now it is totally opposite, Mr. Carter said. “Now the governors brag on how many prisons they’ve built and how many people they can keep in jail and for how long.”<sup>21</sup>

In 1973, the year-end national federal and state prison population totaled 204,000, four percent higher than years before. “In 1973, the “get tough” movement had not yet won the day. However, advocates for a moratorium on prison construction were becoming organized and gaining notable support from key professionals in the field; political calls for tougher sentencing policies were likewise finding receptive ears. In 1973 sentencing policies, the population remained as they had been for many years; the population increase primarily resulted from the rise in crimes rates. Confronted with more arrest, conviction, and prison sentences, prison official began to project the need for more space in which to house the growing number of offenders coming into the system. At the same time, changes in sentencing policy reflected the growing consensus about the desirability of a more determinate system.

It became clear that from these determinate sentencing policies that harsh, fixed terms promoted by the “tough on crime” partisans would prevail. In 1973, the New York state legislature passed the so-called Rockefeller Drug laws after the drug issue was given a high profile by Governor Nelson Rockefeller. At the time, these harsh laws set the stage in nearly every state legislation in the nation, calling for mandatory prison terms for various narcotics offenses and gun violations along with limits on plea bargaining. While the sentencing policy changes of the 1970s were developing, the national political climate continued to shift to the right, which was reflecting in increased public support for “tough

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<sup>21</sup> Marc Mauer, *Race to Incarcerate: The Sentencing Project* (New York, NY: 2006), 55

on crime” policies. Finally, by 1980, the election of Ronald Reagan solidified this change of direction.

The eight-year reign of Ronald Reagan was notable for its success in “re-inventing” the role of government, or lack thereof, in regard to social problems. Within the realm of justice policy, the change began at the top with conservative Supreme Court appointments including Antonin Scalia and William Rehnquist as Chief Justice, and a consequent growing hostility to grievances brought by defenders and prisoners in which approaches shaped the national response to crime. This strategy ultimately became the “new war on drugs” involving several components. At the policy level, the inception of the drug war involved providing more resources to federal drug agencies and greatly enhanced role for the federal court system in prosecuting drug offenses. At the same time, the number of federal drug prosecutions began to increase dramatically while federal prosecutions for all nondrug offenses increased by less than 4 percent during this period.<sup>22</sup>

Michelle Alexander writes,

The arguments and rationalization that have been trotted out in support of racial exclusion and discrimination in its various forms have changed and evolved, but the outcome has remained largely the same. An extraordinary percentage of black men in the United States are legally barred from voting today, just as they have been throughout most of American history. They are also subject to legalized dissemination in employment, housing, education, public benefits, and jury service, just as their parents, grandparents, and great grandparents once were.<sup>23</sup>

What has changed since the collapse of Jim Crow has less to do with the basic structure of society than with the language we use to justify it. In the era of colorblindness, it is no

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<sup>22</sup> Mauer, *Race to Incarcerate*, 59-61.

<sup>23</sup> Michelle Alexander, *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (New York, NY: New York Press, 2011), 1-2.

longer socially permissible to use race, explicitly, as a justification for discrimination, exclusion, and social contempt. So we do not. Rather than rely on race, we use our criminal justice system to label people of color “criminals” and then engage in all the practices we supposedly left behind. Today it is perfectly legal to discriminate against African Americans criminals in nearly all ways that it was once legal to discriminate against African American. Once you are labeled a felon, the old forms of discrimination, employment discrimination, housing discrimination, denial of the rights to vote, denial of education opportunity, denial of food stamps, and other public benefits, and exclusion from jury service are suddenly legal. As a criminal you have scarcely more rights and arguably less respect than a black man living in Alabama at the height of Jim Crow. We have not ended racial caste in America; we have merely redesigned it.

Even in the face of growing social and political opposition to remedial policies such as affirmative action, Alexander clung to the notion that the evil of Jim Crow are behind us and that, while we have a long way to go to fulfill the dream of an egalitarian, multiracial democracy, we have made real progress and are now struggling to hold on to the gains of the past.<sup>24</sup>

Most people assume the War on Drugs was launched in response to the crisis caused by crack cocaine in inner city neighborhoods. This view holds that the racial disparities in drug conviction and sentence, as well as the rapid explosion of the prison population, reflect nothing more than the government’s zealous but benign effort to address rampant drug crime in poor, minority neighborhoods. This view, while understandable, given the sensational media coverage of crack in the 1980s and 1990s, is simply wrong.<sup>25</sup>

The Reagan administration hired staff to publicize the emergence of crack cocaine in 1985 as part of a strategic effort to build public and legislative support for the war. The media campaign was an extraordinary success. Almost overnight, the media was

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<sup>24</sup> Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 3.

<sup>25</sup> Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 5.

saturated with images of black “crack whores,” “Crack dealers,” and “Crack babies images that seemed to confirm the worst negative racial stereotypes about impoverished inner city residents. The media bonanza surrounded the “new demon drug help to catapult the War on Drugs from an ambitious federal policy to an actual war.”<sup>26</sup>

The War on Drugs is the vehicle through which extraordinary numbers of black men are forced into the cage. The entrapment occurs in three distinct phases. The first is the roundup. Vast numbers of people are swept into the criminal justice system by the police who conduct drug operations primarily in poor communities of color. The conviction marks the beginning of the second phase: the period of formal control. Once arrested, defendants are generally denied meaningful legal representation and pressured to plead guilty whether they are or not. Prosecutors are free to “load up” defendants with extra charges and their decisions cannot be challenged for racial bias. The period of control may last a life time. The final stage is the period of invisible punishment imposed on individuals after they step outside the prison gates, a form of punishment that operates largely outside of public view and takes effect outside the traditional sentencing framework.<sup>27</sup> These sanctions are imposed by operation of law rather than decisions of sentencing judge, yet they often have a greater impact on one’s life course than the months or years one actually spends behind bars. They will be discriminated against, legally, for the rest of their lives, denied employment, housing, education, and public benefits. Unable to surmount these obstacles, most will eventually return to prison and then be released again, caught in a closed circuit of perpetual marginality.”

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<sup>26</sup> Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 5.

<sup>27</sup> Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 185-186.

This ultimately leads Alexander to believe that mass incarceration is a stunningly comprehensive and well disguised system of radicalized social control that function in a manner strikingly similar to Jim Crow. The culmination of this social control is what Alexander calls a “racial caste system” a type of stratification wherein people of color are kept in an inferior position. Alexander argues it is directly response to the Civil Rights Movement therefore to be addressed as issue of racial justice and civil rights. According to Alexander, what has been altered since the collapse of Jim Crow is not so much the basic structure of U.S. society, as the language used to justify its affairs. She argues that when people of color are disproportionally labeled as “criminals”, this allows the unleashing of a whole range of legal discrimination measures in employment, housing, education, public benefits, voting rights, jury duty, and so on.<sup>28</sup>

In the 1980’s and 1990’s the drug epidemic era resulted in African American men increase mortality rates, weapons arrest, drug addiction, and child support issues which highly affected the black family structure. Joyce Lowinson argues that African American men drug-use-related conviction largely contribute to the bondage effecting of the black family leaving it in economic and social chaos. In correlation to this matter, many African American men lack the capacity to head and lead the black family in relation to this period.<sup>29</sup>

Torny argues, “Current policies have disproportionately damaged the lives of black offenders and their families and have undermined black communities. Nearly a third of young black men are in prison or jail, or on probation or parole. More than 13

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<sup>28</sup> Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 186-188.

<sup>29</sup> Joyce H. Lowinson and Pedro Luis *Substance Abuse: A Comprehensive Text*, ed. Robert B. Millman (Pittsburgh, PA: Lippincott Williams and Wilkins, 1992), 24.

percent of black men between 25 and 29, more than one in every eight, were in jail or prison in 2001.”<sup>30</sup>

There is lots of evidence that ordinary Americans want to change current policies, and there is lot of evidence that judges and prosecutors at local and state levels are responding. Policy makers in some states are responding, though usually by tinkering at the margins rather than by overhauling current policies. Legislators and executive branch officials in the federal government and in the large, heavily populated states, however, are neither repealing nor fundamentally recasting failed policies. Most remain locked in the politics and attitudes of earlier times and are hunkering down to protect the status quo.<sup>31</sup>

### **The History of the Black Church**

The history of African American Christianity is bound up with the history of American slavery. African Americans encountered Christianity in the context of enslavement, and it was as captives that began the long process of making the gospel their own. The process varied across time and space and defies generalization or easy description. Sometimes conversion came quickly, in explosive moments of “awakening;” more often, it unfolded over generations as Christians beliefs and practices insinuated themselves into slaves’ daily rounds. Yet whatever the pace or pathway, slaves across the Americas were drawn into the dialectic of conversion, transforming the religion of their captors even as it transformed them. African Americans responded to Christianity in a variety of ways. Some rejected it. Others hearkened to Christianity’s call, though the paucity of documentation makes it difficult to say precisely who or why. Most black Christian in seventeenth century records were free people of color. Among the enslaved,

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<sup>30</sup> Michael Tonry, *Thinking About Crime: Sense and Sensibility in American Penal Culture* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press Inc, 2004), 3-4.

<sup>31</sup> Tonry, *Thinking About Crime*, 3-4.

the largest numbers of converts appear to have been baptized in the West Indies prior to transshipment to the mainland. In the Old Testament story of the Exodus in particular, African American found a parallel for their own travails, as well as the promise of a future when captives would go free and the righteous would be rewarded.<sup>32</sup>

### **African Methodism and the Black People**

When Richard Allen, father to African Methodism, went to Philadelphia, he saw that his people needed religion. He proposed a separate church for the African Americans there. At first, this was opposed by both blacks and whites. However, opinions changed when several blacks were dragged from where they were praying in St. George's Methodist Episcopal Church so that whites could be seated. One of those forcibly moved was Allen himself. Allen and several other black leaders then formed the Free African Society in 1788.

Members of the Free African Society began organizing churches. In Philadelphia, Allen's friend Absalom Jones, organized the African Protestant Episcopal Church of St. Thomas, while Allen founded the Bethel Church. The old building in which his congregation met was purchased and dedicated in 1794. Allen started as a deacon and later became an elder. Soon the Free African Society movement spread to other cities, where new churches sprang up. The leaders of these churches remained in close contact.

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<sup>32</sup> James T. Campbell, *Songs of Zion The African Methodist Church in the United States and South Africa* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3-4.



In 1816, they met in Philadelphia and established the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church as a denomination. Allen was elected bishop.<sup>33</sup>

It wasn't until what was called the Second Great Awakening that Christianity began its wildfire sweep throughout the South. This revival, occurring near the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, came about primarily through clergymen of two denominations: the Methodists and Baptist. Rather than stressing extensive teachings as a prerequisite for salvation, these itinerant preachers emphasized an experience with God. Repentance and a change of heart led the converts into a conversion experience.<sup>34</sup>

The southern churches strong sentiment against the abolitionists eventually caused deep divisions among the leadership of white denominational organizations. Of course, this represented only one of many areas in which divisions occurred between the North and South in the years leading up to the Civil War. Regardless of the safeguards slave owners attempted to set in place, slave insurrections and revolts still occurred. Denmark Vesey, a former slave who had purchased his freedom, later became a minister at a black church in Charleston, South Carolina. Vesey felt that the bible did not support slavery and attempted to encourage a slave uprising in the South in the summer of 1822; however, authorities got wind of the plan. The revolt was broken up, and Vesey and other conspirators were hanged on July 2, 1822.<sup>35</sup>

In 1860, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had a black membership of around 207,766. By 1866, that membership was less than 78, 742 souls. Yet, despite

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<sup>33</sup> C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 51-52.

<sup>34</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 23-24.

<sup>35</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 25.

these implications, the severance from the white Methodist Church was not universal, North or South. In consequence of that historic contradiction, the contemporary United Methodist Church has the largest black constituency of any mainline denomination, and one with a history so distinctive as to raise the popular allegation of it being “a church-within-a church.”<sup>36</sup> Black Methodist ordinarily refers to the African Methodist Episcopal Church (A.M.E.), and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church (C.M.E.). Five smaller black Methodist communions merit mention. One of these, the Union American Methodist Episcopal Church (U.A.M.E.), is actually the oldest of all the black Methodist denomination. Originally called the Union Church of Africans, it was founded by Peter Spencer in Wilmington, Delaware, in 1813.<sup>37</sup>

Peter J. Paris asserts that the Black Church Christian tradition as prophetic principle. The black Christian tradition became institutionalized in the independent black churches, prior to their emergence, the desire and quest for freedom, together with their concomitant resistance to slavery and racism, had no enduring public form. The principle of freedom and equality of all persons under God is not an abstract idea but a normative condition of the black churches, wherein who participated, can experience its reality.<sup>38</sup>

It was out of the crucible of racial oppression, then, that the black Christian faith took form. As such, it represented the capacity of the human spirit to transcend the condition of racism in both thought and practice. This tradition has been represented as a fundamental principle of criticism justifying and motivating all endeavors by blacks for survival and social transformation. Thus, the black Christian tradition has exercised both priestly and prophetic functions: the former aiding and abetting the race in its capacity to endure the effect of racism, the latter

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<sup>36</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 48.

<sup>37</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 25-26, 48.

<sup>38</sup> Peter Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 10-11.

utilizing all available means to effect religious and moral reform in the society at large.<sup>39</sup>

Anthony Pinn states,

During the period following slavery, from the latter part of the nineteenth century on into the early twentieth century, there was retrenchment in the liberative thinking and activism of the Black Church. While some churches continued efforts of social and political activism, others, focused on the rewards of the heavenly world, directed their energies toward the spiritual condition of African American. And yet, even here, there was a liberative emphasis. The difference, then, involves liberation through spiritual means over against liberation through forms of societal engagement.<sup>40</sup>

In very many cases, concrete social results evolved from spiritual preoccupation. “Black churches developed a variety of social services including libraries, job training, basic education programs, and health care programs. And these activities on the part of black churches speak to an appreciation for a social form of Christianity that is sensitive to the changing cultural and social realities encountered by black Americans.

### Conclusion

The Civil Rights movement provided an illustrative example of the black church’s commitment to social and political liberation. The Black Church also provided the ideological and theological underpinning for the movement. Pinn argue that “It is with this theological shift (to black theology) that liberation is most forcefully presented as a metaphor for the Black Church work for liberation.”<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches*, 10-11.

<sup>40</sup> Braian K. Blount, *Can I Get A Witness? Reading Revelation through African American Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 205), 43.

<sup>41</sup> Blount, *Can I Get A Witness*, 43-44.

“Whether a watering hole, a lighthouse, an anchor, a refuge, or a rock in a weary land, the Black Church shows no sign of shutting down, pulling back, or changing course today. The institution that has performed such a historic role in the past and looks forward to the 21<sup>st</sup> century with anticipation, excitement, and courage.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Norma Jean Lutz, *The History of the Black Church* (Philadelphia, PA: Chelsea House Publishers 2001), 10-21.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS**

Chapter three focuses on the obstacle course of young adults' systematic oppression within the Edisto Island, South Carolina, community. The examined issues are of young adults' struggles with drug and alcohol dependency, sexual immorality, unintended pregnancy, family conflicts, mental health challenges, stressful relationships, behavioral difficulties, and transitions from school and home settings to adulthood. In addition, young adults' absence from church settings seems to indicate that they are no longer relevant to their issues and struggles based on these systemic problems. With the biblical foundation of the Old Testament text of Exodus 3:6-10 and the New Testament text of Luke 4:18-19, this unit will explore theological reflections surrounding these texts and subjects.

In this chapter, the problems and issues of systematic oppression were addressed to identify solutions to achieving positive outcomes across religious, family, employment, education and community settings to liberate black young adults from these problems. Expertise will be drawn from of a wide range of contributors such as clergy, medical practitioners, educators, researchers, administrators, parents, and young people, to gain knowledge and support to liberate people from behavioral, emotional, relationship, social, medical and mental health issues. The complex challenges and

expectations of young adults will be addressed to assist in the transition from oppression to liberation and prosperity in adult life.

Three areas of theological discipline will be discussed in an effort of addressing the problems while developing a model of ministry to abolish the problems surrounding the young adults in the Edisto Island community. The three focal points of theology are preaching and worship with pastoral care as a priestly responsibility, practical theology with a focus on Christian ethics and practice, and existentialist theology.

### **Introduction**

Preaching and worship with pastoral care as priestly responsibility is often seen as constrained to music and liturgy, while preaching is understood to operate on different principles for different purposes. Michael Quicke says that at best, the worship services hint to a more profound reality of experiencing God.<sup>1</sup> Sheer goodness and a loving, joyous, peaceful relationship in a committed holiness, designed to impact those around us as a community unit in living for God's greatest purpose, at the same time over flows as a church and community spreading beyond the walls of the church into the community. Preaching should be viewed as worship, as both worship and preaching belong within the same Trinitarian dynamic, serving the same purpose and manifest by similar characteristics, drawing on insights from wide-ranging literature and practitioners on both sides of the gap.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Michael J. Quicke, *Preaching as Worship: An Integrated Approach to Formation in Your Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publisher Group, 2011), 12.

<sup>2</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*. 12.

In essence, the common strategy of preaching and worship is for awakening people's emotions and engaging their hearts to find the areas of human life where the emotions and struggles are already running high and where the hearts are already engaged; and that is the place to build the foundation of the sermon. Specific areas of pain for the African American community consist of substance abuse, unintended pregnancy, troubled marriage, anguish of wayward teenagers, stress at work, sexual temptation, the breakdown of community, the wounded heart of past abuses, the absence of intimacy and vulnerability. If preaching and worship are planted in these areas of pain with modest skill, illustration and personal vulnerability, the hearts of the parishioners will be transformed. The parishioners will experience the good feelings of empathy and satisfaction of attentive resonating spirits. Pastoral care with priestly responsibility is of:

Emotional and spiritual support that can be found in many cultures and traditions. It has been described in the modern context as individual and corporate patience in which professionals trained in pastoral care support people in their pain, loss and anxiety, and their triumphs, joys and victories.<sup>3</sup>

Pastoral care is also where people offer “help and caring to others in their church or the wider community.”<sup>4</sup> Pastoral care can be applied to listening, supporting, encouraging and befriending. Pastoral care can also encompass a wide variety of issues including health, social and moral education, behavior management and emotional support.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> University of Canberra, “What Does It Mean to Be a Pastoral Care Worker?” University of Canberra, accessed April 29, 2016, <http://www.canberra.edu.au/current-students/canberra-students/student-support/multi-faith-centre/pastoral-care/pastoral-worker>.

<sup>4</sup> St. Patrick's Coleraine, “Pastoral Care,” St. Patrick's Coleraine, accessed April 29, 2016, <http://www.stpats.co.uk/pastoral-care.html>.

<sup>5</sup> St. Patrick's Coleraine, “Pastoral Care,” accessed April 29, 2016, <http://www.stpats.co.uk/pastoral-care.html>.

Gordon Lynch says pastoral care and counseling are designed to “help people work through moral dilemmas and thinking about what it means to act in an ethical and competent way.”<sup>6</sup> In Lynch’s view:

If we are to get a proper view of the significance of ethics for pastoral care and counseling, it is important to recognize the fundamental role that moral values play in all forms of pastoral practice. Pastoral practice is essentially value-based, and more specifically, it is suggested that the work of pastoral care and counselors are inspired by their vision of the good life.<sup>7</sup>

Practical theology with a focus on Christian ethics is of utmost importance in that it speaks to the interrelatedness of Christian disciplines and practices.

Practice holds in deliberation theological revelation, theoretical science, and the practical of ministry. There exists a decisive revelation between theology, theory, and practice. Practical theology is an engaging practice between theology, theory, and practice, with each one feeding back upon the others. While “Praxis” attempts to confine this reflexive quality of practical theology for effective ministry with the mission of the church, the analysis of actual situations is significant to the practical theological method, which comprises individuals and corporate experience.<sup>8</sup>

Christian ethics and practice focus on fulfilling the groundwork of Christian ethical principles and discuss their application to the major issues of Christian ethical decision in today’s society. The challenge with Christian ethics is the ability to prioritize values according to God’s redemptive plan.<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately the lack of utilizing Christian ethics has change the intended world as initially planned according to the purpose of God. Although it is important and imperative to hold God’s morals and values in the light

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<sup>6</sup> Gordon Lynch, *Pastoral Care and Counseling* (London, UK: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2002), 7.

<sup>7</sup> Lynch, *Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Dale P. Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches: Bridging Black Theology and African American Folk Religion* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 1.

<sup>9</sup> Gary DeLashmutt, “An Approach to Christian Ethics,” Xenos Christian Fellowship, accessed April 29, 2016, <http://www.xenos.org/essays/approach-christian-ethics>.



of truth, it must also be decided how to effectively manage and approach the values of God.<sup>10</sup> “To engage God's morals and values means to seek sanctification or moral character development by relating to God personally and depending on the power of the Holy Spirit to change us.”<sup>11</sup>

Robin W. Lovin stated in her book *Introduction to Christian Ethics*,

The study of ethics begins with critical reflection on a way of life; Christian ethics has its roots in the work of the Hebrew prophets, who called people to renew their covenant with God by living with justice, kindness, and humanity. It grows from the teaching of Jesus, who taught love of God and neighbor. Christian ethics is also closely connected with another tradition of critical reflection that begins with Greek philosophy and asks what it is that everybody is seeking. Thus, Christian thinking about ethics develops as shared human questions find specifically Christian answers.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding existentialist theology, Michael Joseph Brown states that it has a historic and influential context, which is grounded in the African American experience. “Black theology seeks to create this irregular, but fundamental datum of its theological reflection, as well as the foundation for its hermeneutic of liberation.”<sup>13</sup> The method of black theology reveals structures of oppression, “Such as “class,” “gender,” “global capitalism,” and so on.”<sup>14</sup>

Blackness is the essential symbol engaged in this mode of theological reflection. It should not, however, be condensed to the element of skin color. Therefore,

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<sup>10</sup> DeLashmutt, “An Approach to Christian Ethics,” accessed April 29, 2016, <http://www.xenos.org/essays/approach-christian-ethics>.

<sup>11</sup> DeLashmutt, “An Approach to Christian Ethics,” accessed April 29, 2016, <http://www.xenos.org/essays/approach-christian-ethics>.

<sup>12</sup> Robin W. Lovin, *Introduction to Christian Ethics: Goals, Duties, and Virtues* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2011), 3.

<sup>13</sup> Michael Joseph Brown, *Blackening of the Bible: The Aims of African American Biblical Scholarship* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2004), 17.

<sup>14</sup> Brown, *Blackening of the Bible*, 17.

black theologians have been able to address other forms of oppression while remaining focused on the symbolic center.<sup>15</sup>

In the end, this project will help in finding and maintaining employment and education, establishing new relationships, overcoming emotional and addiction problems, building careers, and developing in support of eliminating oppression in return for constructing prosperity, responsibility and accountability to God, family and community. It will also ensure the existence of effective adult services that are developmentally and culturally appropriate. Finally, it will address system fragmentation, so the mental health, education, justice, and other systems can work together to service black young adult's best interests in the Edisto Island community and communities around the world.

### **Preaching and Worship/Pastoral Care**

These theological disciplines are often seen as constrained to music and liturgy while preaching is understood to operate on different principles and for different purposes. Michael Quicke says that at best, the worship services provide a profound reality of experiencing God. Preaching should be viewed as worship, as both worship and preaching belong within the same Trinitarian dynamic, serving the same purpose and manifest by similar characteristics, drawing on insights from wide-ranging literature and practitioners on both sides of the gap.<sup>16</sup>

Dan Kimball claims,

That church success is measured by “looking at what our practices produce in the called people of God as they are sent out on a mission to live as light and salt in their communities (Matt. 5:13-16). And a powerful New Testament example of

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<sup>15</sup> Brown, *Blackening of the Bible*, 17.

<sup>16</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 12.

such a church is found in the emerging Thessalonians church of the first century. You become an example to all believers in Macedonia and in Achaia. For the word of the Lord has sounded forth from you...in every place your faith in God has become known...and how you turned to God from idols, to serving a living and true God (1 Thess. 1:7-9). These believers are urged to continue pleasing God so that you may behave properly toward outsiders (1 Thess. 4:12).<sup>17</sup>

Kimball also stated,

During my years as a pastor, I helped plan weekly services of worship ever yearning for fresh experiences of God's awesomeness, intrusiveness, inclusiveness and community formation. My vision of worship occasionally opened up to high mountain possibilities "so that through the church the wisdom of God in its rich variety might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was in accordance with the eternal purpose that he has carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-11). Sometimes I sense that what was happening within inauspicious four walls was cosmically connected with humankind's ultimate destiny. We actually downsize worship, dooming it to live in small boxes. With shortsightedness, we look through the wrong end of the binoculars. Worship has high claims about believers joining in the worship of heaven (Rev. 7:11-12), sharing in a new creation being formed (2 Cor. 5:17), and living praiseworthy lives before a watching word (1 Pet. 2:11-12).<sup>18</sup>

But instead, the term worship becomes locked down into planning Sunday services, especially the music. Those who plan Sunday services, especially the music, are called worship leaders. So we settle for lowlands that treat higher ranges as fantasy, unlikely ever to be seen. Over time it appears increasingly unlikely that worship can be different. How could worship be more real, astonishing, closer and higher for us than we could possibly imagine? Being 'lost in wonder, love, and praise' remains only a line in an old hymn rather than an authentic possibility.<sup>19</sup>

Worship is relevant and necessary in the Christian experience in that it stretches the widest of horizons and it is overwhelming in scope.<sup>20</sup> Susan White provides valuable insight through a survey on the foundation of Christian worship. Through the survey

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<sup>17</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 12.

<sup>18</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 12.

<sup>19</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 12-13.

<sup>20</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 13-14.

there were six basic theological models discussed. The models consisted of the following: service to God, mirror of heaven, affirmation, communion, proclamation and arena of transcendence.<sup>21</sup> Each of these models was undergirded with biblical reference to ensure that they were grounded in the word of God.

In service to God, this model indicates that, “worship offers what we have and asks people to,” and the scriptural reference is Romans 12:1 where we are instructed to offer our bodies as living sacrifices unto God.<sup>22</sup> The second model of mirror to heaven is centered on Revelations chapters four and five and gives the message that, “Worship enters ceaseless praises of Heaven associated with Orthodox and Eastern rites.”<sup>23</sup> Thirdly, affirmation is necessary because “worship reinforces the Christian ethic for vocation,” as recorded in Psalms 56.<sup>24</sup> Acts 2:42 helps congregants to understand and embrace the act of communion because “Worship forms and sustains essential relationships.”<sup>25</sup> Public affirmation or proclamation is necessary in worship because it serves as the primary place where Christians gather together to make public affirmation and witness. The New Testament Book of 1 Peter 2:9 provide the biblical framework for this argument.<sup>26</sup> The final model is arena of transcendence because, “worship enters the presence of the living God, overwhelming by awesome holiness, majesty, and power as recorded in Exodus

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<sup>21</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 13-14.

<sup>22</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 13-14.

<sup>23</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 13-14.

<sup>24</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 13-14.

<sup>25</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 13-14.

<sup>26</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 13-14.

3:5.<sup>27</sup> Quicke concludes, “Services, affirmation and proclamation, while encountering transcendence and newness in celebrating our communion with God.”<sup>28</sup> “There is no substitute for preaching in worship. Preaching provides the proclamatory thrust, without which the church is never formed, and worship is never made possible.”<sup>29</sup> John Killing made the following assertion:

It complements the creedal, poetic nature of the liturgy and keeps before men the absolute contemporaneity of the Gospel, as of a Word made always present and personal to them under the pressure of their current life situations. Above all it provides better than anything else the necessary encounter between the lackadaisical worshiper and intensity of Christ’s lordship. It, of all the elements in the liturgy, is primary, for it and it alone is able to guarantee the success of Christian worship and the Christian sacraments.<sup>30</sup>

Elaine M. Ward further adds that,

Worship is an art: a painting or sculpture or drama that helps us see, a psalm, a hymn, a sermon that helps us hear, a sacrament we taste, a baptism we experience, a hand we touch in passing the peace of Christ, the wonder we smell because we are “the odor of God” in the sanctuary, the prayer we speak from the heart, and word we receive from God. Worship is a way for the community to speak and act out their identity, faith, and mission, their vision and their search for new vision. The Greek word for ‘liturgy’ is an act of public service, the work of the people, not their entertainment. When worship, however, feels as drudgery, difficult work, it is time to reassess our worship. The ‘work of the people’ means joyous participatory thanksgiving and praise of God. Worship is the expression of praise, thanksgiving, confession in prayer and song, and the celebration of the word and sacraments that form a people, passionately alive to the wonder, mystery, and glory of God’s creation, into a community of faith, dependent on the tender mercies and grace of God.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 13-14.

<sup>28</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 14.

<sup>29</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 13-14.

<sup>30</sup> Quicke, *Preaching as Worship*, 28.

<sup>31</sup> Elaine M. Ward, *Asking for Wonder: Resources for Creative Worship and Preaching* (Lima, OH: CSS Publishing Company, Inc., 1997), 28.

Pastoral care as priestly responsibility is “Emotional and spiritual support that can be found in many cultures and traditions. It has been described in the modern context as individual and corporate patience in which trained pastoral care professionals support people in their pain, loss and anxiety, and their triumphs, joys and victories.”<sup>32</sup> Pastoral care is also where people offer help and caring to others in their church or wider community. Pastoral care can be applied to listening, supporting, encouraging and befriending. Pastoral care can also encompass a wide variety of issues including health, social and moral education, behavior management and emotional support.<sup>33</sup>

Gordon Lynch says that pastoral care and counseling are designed, “To help people work through moral dilemmas and think about what it means to act in an ethical and competent way.”<sup>34</sup> In Lynch’s view,

If we are to get a proper view of the significance of ethics for pastoral care and counseling, it is important to recognize the fundamental role that values play in all forms of pastoral practice. Pastoral practice is essentially value-based and, more specifically suggest that the work of pastoral care and counselors is inspired by their vision of the good life.<sup>35</sup>

The good life can be defined as living happy, well, healthy, wealthy and wise. “This element of the good life thus involves an understanding of what non-moral goods we should pursue in life, whether material success, esteem from peers, or romantic love.”<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> University of Canberra, “What Does It Mean to Be a Pastoral Care Worker?” University of Canberra, accessed April 27, 2016, <http://www.canberra.edu.au/current-students/canberra-students/student-support/multi-faith-centre/pastoral-care/pastoral-worker>.

<sup>33</sup> St. Patrick’s Coleraine, “Pastoral Care,” St. Patrick’s Coleraine, accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.stpats.co.uk/pastoral-care.html>.

<sup>34</sup> Lynch, *Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 7-12.

<sup>35</sup> Lynch, *Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 7-12.

<sup>36</sup> Lynch, *Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 12-13.

The second common element of a definition of the good life is a notion of what it means to live in a way that is morally commendable. This element of the good life is thus concerned with the virtues and behaviors of a life that we can consider good, such as to be honest, giving generously of money and time, and being loyal in relationships. Given these two different elements a definition of the good life, the question inevitably arises about the relationship between the two. An argument commonly advanced within moral philosophy is if one leads a life that is morally commendable, then one will experience the happiest life that one can in one's circumstances. While others would contest the idea, it seems clear that a full definition of the good life will need not only to set out what it means to live morally, but also what the relationship is between happiness and morality. A vision of the good life provides a hermeneutical framework through which pastoral practitioners make sense of the lives of those they encounter, then it seems reasonable to claim that this moral vision has direct consequences for the way in which pastoral workers choose to engage with others. In seeking to promote human well-being, pastoral workers will naturally decide to act in ways that they believe may enable others to experience something of the good life.<sup>37</sup>

### **Practical Theology**

Carl S. Dudley states, "Faith also requires a solid foundation for social ministry with a tough-minded community analysis. To share with others in building ministry, we must see the world as clearly as possible. Without such a hard-eyed reexamination, our familiarity and our prejudices will bind us to the past and blind us to problems, trends, and new possibilities."<sup>38</sup> "A community study should shift the concern from self to others around us. In community analysis progression of steps are used that move from gathering more objective information, to reflecting on and probing the information, to the point of a committee making preliminary decisions on the focus of ministry."<sup>39</sup> The various steps

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<sup>37</sup> Lynch, *Pastoral Care and Counseling*, 12-13.

<sup>38</sup> Carl S. Dudley, *Community Ministry: New Challenges, Proven Steps to Faith-Based Initiatives* (Herndon, VA: The Alban Institute, 2002), 19-21.

<sup>39</sup> Dudley, *Community Ministry*, 19-21.

include: define your community, identify the people, find the invisible people, analyze the intangible forces, listen to your community, and choose your focus of ministry.<sup>40</sup>

In defining the community there are many approaches, but the three that will be focused on in this study are: chart the physical boundaries, identify the anchor institutions, and look for the gathering places. The three perspectives in step two, identifying the people has three perspectives, which are to observe population and lifestyles, note historical changes and current trends, and review statistical summaries. Step three seeks to find the invisible people. These are the people that every community has and are ignored, marginalized, or simply out of sight. By identifying these groups, the committee and the congregation become more sensitive to a range of conditions in the community. Step four focuses on analyzing the intangible forces. Just as churches have always been concerned with spiritual forces, the social, economic, political, and religious forces operating in your community should be identified. These forces may be intangible, but they are real incentives and barrier in the lives of the people that need to be reached in the development of the ministry. In evaluating step five, one listens to the community by using data and feeling. One can initiate conversation with a wide variety of people from every segment and community life. The final level of analysis invites one to draw together the themes of your study and insights of the conversations to make a tentative choice for a social ministry. Step Six encourages choosing the focus of ministry. Although a firm decision on the appropriate ministry depends on finding a comfortable fit between the social context and congregation the community analysis into focus by deciding on a possible ministry or ministries.<sup>41</sup>

For many generations African Americans have been faced with the effects of racism, and the system of slavery and its effects. One of the greatest challenges is the “Christian precepts and biblical teaching because of incomprehensible racism in the face of religions meaning. The task of interpretation and re-appropriation predominated the discrimination processes through the generation of black preaching. African American folk religion has developed a black hermeneutic for the interpretation and application of the Bible.”<sup>42</sup> Creative preaching and the worship experience shaped the ecclesial praxis in

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<sup>40</sup> Dudley, *Community Ministry*, 19-21.

<sup>41</sup> Dudley, *Community Ministry*, 19-21.

<sup>42</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches*, 1-17.



the early years of freedom, which developed out of the oral culture and corporate experiences.<sup>43</sup> For example,

There were racist conditions that limited and prohibited reading of the Bible and freely gathering in churches, quite unintentionally, but directly, contributed to the underground insurgence of these black church traditions. The Bible in black preaching grew out of the constrictions imposed by slaveholders and white churches. Slaves became increasingly familiar with the Bible through black preachers who would interpret scriptures through the dramatization of the biblical story and its application to African American life. This use and interpretation of the Bible eventually became the slave's primary means of adopting Christianity. Christianity then became a new religion. Though this contention is difficult to excavate, it is clear that the actual process of adopting Christianity would have accelerated with the increasing loss of their native languages and thereby, their folklore, proverbs and idioms.<sup>44</sup>

Interestingly, slaves were not passive recipients of Christianity and often silently rejected sermons in the midst of the slave owners. "Clear distinctions were drawn between the gospel message of God and the unacceptable religion of the white preachers. The intrinsic values of African spiritual aided in the appeal and the adaptation of the Christian faith consequently."<sup>45</sup> The centrality of the Bible was accepted "As an active process of interpretation and re-appropriation involving spiritual values, sacred beliefs, and both generational and immediate history experience."<sup>46</sup>

The observation indicates a unique role of scripture in black preaching. Not only did the biblical stories appear quite similar to the African ancestral faith narratives, especially those stories from the Hebrew scriptures, but they also proved extremely of black slaves and oppressed free blacks. The early African Americans were interested in God's word and will for them. They focused on God's activity in human history and life in the spirit. They did not perceive their devotion to the Bible as anti-intellectual; rather they accepted it as a book of very real accounts of God, Christ, and God's people. The black preacher presents and

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<sup>43</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches*, 17.

<sup>44</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches*, 17.

<sup>45</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches*, 18.

<sup>46</sup> Andrews, *Practical Theology for Black Churches*, 18.

interprets biblical stories into the language and experiences of black people. A black hermeneutic guides this process by interpreting the Bible in terms that can be readily grasped and applied. The ministry and mission of black churches have been grounded in the story of God's involvement in humanity, God's activity and in human history on behalf of the oppressed and the disadvantaged continues the formative properties of black biblical hermeneutic. The primary task for the black preacher then is the revelation of God's interests and activity in the hearers' immediate lives. This task becomes an adventure in the exploration in black life. The process of interpretation therefore recreates a sacred story in African American life practical theology.<sup>47</sup>

Christian ethics and practice will attempt to fulfill the groundwork of Christian ethical principles and discuss their application to the major issues of Christian ethical decisions in today's society. The youth have fallen from the Christian ethics ladder and are no longer functioning according to the intention in which God created the world. "While one must hold all of God's moral values to be true and perfect, one must decide how to approach and pursue those values. God has a strategy for accomplishing this goal. To engage God's morals and values means to seek sanctification or moral character development by relating to God personally and depending on the power of the Holy Spirit to change us."<sup>48</sup>

Robin W. Lovin stated in *Introduction to Christian Ethics*,

From the beginning, Christians have shared in the search for good life that Aristotle regarded as the main object of ethics. For Christians, a distinctive understanding of God's relationship to humanity and history reshapes the Aristotelian idea of secure and lasting happiness around five key themes that we will call the Christian stance. The work of Augustine, bishop in the Roman city of Hippo, in North Africa, gives us an example of how Christian writers dealt with the resulting tension between the Christian life and the human search for the good life. As we learned from Aristotle, ethics often begin by setting choices and goals in a large context instead of seeking happiness in immediate pleasures and short-term success. A good person makes choices that sustain happiness over a

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<sup>47</sup> Andrews, *For Black Churches*, 18-19.

<sup>48</sup> DeLashmutt, "An Approach to Christian Ethics."

lifetime. This Aristotelian search for good life will last but there are different ways of thinking about the world in which that search occurs. Stoics warned that those who enjoy the success and honors that human society can provide are staking their happiness on things they cannot control. They will live better lives if they avoid attachment to people and things and depend on the order of reason and nature, which does not vary from place to place and time to time.<sup>49</sup>

The Epicureans argued the counterpoint and believed that happiness was a result of seizing opportunities and not focusing on temporary arrangements of life. Aristotle and his successors gave “Stance” to those ways of orienting particular choices toward a large frame of understanding. “The early Christian had a stance that set their decisions in a large context, but in their case, the framework was a narrative of God’s dealing with humanity understanding choices and goals thus more than seeing an individual an undivided as Aristotle and his success.”<sup>50</sup>

The whole of nature is God’s creation, and the order in nature must be understood in relation to God’s purpose. For the Christian, those purposes were known in a powerful way in the life of Jesus. In Paul’s account as we have seen, Jesus was the beginning of a new creation and Christian had to understand themselves as part of that order. Charles Curran summarizes the stance of Catholic moral theology with five points in Christian teaching about God, humanity, and history cast the net more widely to include other Christian traditions and the range of ideas will be quite broad, and disagreement will be obvious. Nevertheless, any account of the Christian faith must include all five of them which provides one way to identify what Christians have in common as well as what distinguishes them from other faith and approach to their moral choices and decisions. The five points in Christian teaching are creation, sin, incarnation, redemption and resurrection destiny, history and the traditions of the Christian faith. Christians learn these points by using them over a lifetime in worship, reading, discussion, and prayer. In evaluating creation, it is the will of God and viewed as the beginning of all things. Christians believe that God created the world out of nothing because creation comes from God. It has also been concluded by the Christian community that the world is orderly and knowable by reason. Human being can be aware of the order God created because human life is a special place in creation because men and women are created “in the image of God.” Remembering Christian stance helps build connections between those who share

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<sup>49</sup> Lovin, *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, 25-26.

<sup>50</sup> Lovin, *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, 25-26.

the Christian faith and those who do not, because all persons share the image of God.<sup>51</sup>

It is clear that sin is the pathway in which evil entered the world and Creation suggests that everything from God is good. “When people deny their relationship to God or try to live outside of it, they, lose the goodness they should have as part of God’s creation.”<sup>52</sup> Eventually, even nature itself can be changed and corrupted by human sin, and as demonstrated by the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis. Most importantly, sin and the fall of Adam reminds Christians that no one escapes human limitations and all come subject to it.<sup>53</sup> However, God established the redemptive plan to active salvation. “Redemption transforms human lives and the world so that humanity can function in a rightful relationship with God. The functional relationship was the intended plan at creation.”<sup>54</sup>

Resurrection destiny completes the Christian understanding of God’s relationship to human and history that began with creation. Resurrection is the conclusion of the story of Jesus that begins with the incarnation. Paul and other New Testament writers indicated that Jesus resurrection marks the beginning of the new creation. Resurrection begins with Jesus and it comes to completion at the end of history. This understanding of God’s relationship to humanity and history has been part of Christianity from the beginning. Concepts develop, language varies over time and Christian discusses interpretations, but the Christian stance provides a way to understand how Christians generally think about human life as they approach the question of ethics.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> Lovin, *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, 27-28.

<sup>52</sup> Lovin, *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, 27-28.

<sup>53</sup> Lovin, *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, 28.

<sup>54</sup> Lovin, *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, 28-29.

<sup>55</sup> Lovin, *Introduction to Christian Ethics*, 30-31.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer states that grace is cheap and costly. He further adds that cheap grace is an enemy of the church, its sold in the market place at a lesser price; it is represented as the church's inexhaustible treasuring.<sup>56</sup> However, God blesses with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits, and He offers grace without price, grace without cost. The essence of grace is that the account has been paid in advance; and because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing; since the cost was infinite, the possibilities of using and spending it are infinite. Cheap grace means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth. In such a church, the world finds a cheap covering for its sins, no contrition is required; cheap grace therefore amounts to denial of the living word of God. Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, communion without confession, and absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship.<sup>57</sup>

"Costly grace, on the other hand, is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it, a man will gladly go and sell all that he has; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows Him."<sup>58</sup> "Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock."<sup>59</sup> "Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ."<sup>60</sup> "It is costly because it condemn sin, and because it justifies the sinner above all. It is costly because it

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<sup>56</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* (New York, NY: Touchstone, 1995), 43-45.

<sup>57</sup> Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 43-45.

<sup>58</sup> Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 43-45.

<sup>59</sup> Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 43-45.

<sup>60</sup> Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 43-45.

cost God the life of his Son yet were bought at a price, and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us.”<sup>61</sup> “The justification of the sinner in the world degenerated into the justification of sin and the world. Costly grace was turned into cheap grace without discipleship.”<sup>62</sup>

Smith believes certain confusions have arisen in our understanding of religion, faith and beliefs. Smith states that faith needs to be distinguished from religion. Faith is deeper, richer, and more personal. It is engendered by a religious tradition in some cases and to some degree by its doctrines; but it is a quality of the person not of the system. It is an orientation of the personality, to oneself, to one's neighbor, to the universe; a total response; a way of seeing whatever ones sees and handling whatever ones handles; a capacity to live at more than a mundane level; to see, to feel, to act in terms of, a transcendent dimension.<sup>63</sup>

Belief in religious contexts arises out of the effort to translate experiences and relation to transcendence into concepts or proposition. Belief may be one of the ways faith expresses itself. One does not have faith in a proposition or concept. Faith rather, is the relation of trust in and loyalty to the transcendent about which concepts or propositions, beliefs are fashioned. Faith is a quality of human living at its best. It has taken the form of serenity, courage, loyalty and service. It is a quite confidence and joy which enables one to feel at home in the universe, and to find meaning in the world and life. A meaning that is profound and ultimate and is stable no matter what may happen. Men and women with this kind of faith face catastrophe and confusion, affluence and sorrow.<sup>64</sup>

### **Existentialist Theology**

Existential is a movement in philosophy and literature that emphasizes individual existence, freedom and choice. It is based on the view that humans define their own meaning in life and try to make rational decisions despite existing in irrational world. It

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<sup>61</sup> Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 43-45.

<sup>62</sup> Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship*, 50.

<sup>63</sup> James W. Fowler, *Stages of Faith: The Psychology of Human Development and the Quest for Meaning* (New York, NY: Harper Collins, 1981), 10-11.

<sup>64</sup> Fowler, *Stages of Faith*, 10-11.

focuses on the question of human existence, and the feeling that there is no purpose or explanation at the core of existence. It holds that, there is no God or any other transcendent force, the only way to counter this nothingness and hence to find meaning in life is by embracing existence.<sup>65</sup>

James Cone states,

Christian theology is a theology of liberation. It is a rational study of the being of God in the world in light of the existential situation of an oppressed community, relating the forces of liberation to the essence of the gospel, which is Jesus Christ. This means that its sole reason for existence is to put into ordered speech the meaning of God's activity in the world, so that the community of the oppressed will recognize that its inner thrust for liberation is not only consistent with the gospel but is the gospel of Jesus Christ. There can be no Christian theology that is not identified unreservedly with those who are humiliated and abused. In fact, theology ceases to be a theology of the gospel when it fails to arise out of the community of the oppressed. For it is impossible to speak of the God of Israelites history, who is the God revealed in Jesus Christ, without recognizing that God is the God of and for those who labor and are over laden.<sup>66</sup>

A traditional understanding of theology views it as the discipline that seeks to analyze the nature of the Christian faith in the light of the oppressed arises chiefly from biblical tradition itself. "You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my own possession among all peoples" (Ex 29:4-5).

Certainly, this means, among other things, that God's call of this people is related to its oppressed condition and to God's own liberating activity already seen in the exodus. By delivering this people from Egyptian bondage and inaugurating the covenant

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<sup>65</sup> "The Basics of Philosophy," accessed April 21, 2016, <http://www.philosophybasics.com>.

<sup>66</sup> James H. Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 1.

on the basis of that historical event, God is revealed as the God of the oppressed, involved in their history, liberating them from human bondage.<sup>67</sup>

Later stages of Israelite history also show that God is particularly concerned about the oppressed within the community of Israel. The rise of Old Testament prophecy is due primarily to the lack of justice within that community. The prophets of Israel are prophets of social justice, reminding the people that Yahweh is the author of justice. The consistent theme in Israelite prophecy is Yahweh's concern for the lack of social, economic, and political justice for those who are poor and unwanted in society. Yahweh, according to Hebrew prophecy, will not tolerate injustice against the poor; God will vindicate the poor.

In the New Testament, the theme of liberation is reaffirmed by Jesus himself. The conflict with Satan and the powers of this world, the condemnation of the rich, the insistence that the kingdom of God is for the poor, and the locating of his ministry among the poor, these and other features of the career of Jesus show that his work was directed to the oppressed for the purpose of their liberation. To suggest that he was speaking of a "spiritual" liberation fails to take seriously Jesus' thoroughly Hebrew view of human nature. Entering into the kingdom of God means that Jesus himself becomes the ultimate loyalty of humankind, for he is the kingdom. This view of existence in the world has far-reaching implications for economic, political, and social institution. They can no longer have ultimate claim on human life; human beings are liberated and thus free to rebel against all powers that threaten human life. That is what Jesus had in mind when he said.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and

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<sup>67</sup> Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 1-2.



recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).

Unfortunately, American white theology has not been involved in the struggle for black liberation. It has been basically a theology of the white oppressor, giving religious sanction to the genocide of Amerindians and the enslavement of Africans. From the very beginning to the present day, American white theological thought has been “patriotic,” either by defining the theological task independently of black suffering (the liberal northern approach) or by defining Christianity as compatible with white racism (the conservative southern approach). In both cases theology becomes a servant of the state, and that can only mean death to blacks.

Black theology is a theology of liberation because it is a theology which arises from identification with the oppressed black of America, seeking to interpret the gospel of Jesus in the light of the black condition. It believes that the liberation of the black community is God’s liberation. The task of black theology then is to analyze the nature of the gospel of Jesus Christ in the light of oppressed blacks so they will see the gospel as inseparable from their humiliated condition, and as bestowing on them the necessary power to break the chains of oppression. This means that it is a theology of and for the black community, seeking to interpret the religious dimensions of the forces of liberation in the community.<sup>68</sup>

Michael Joseph Brown states that black theology seeks to create this irregular, but fundamental datum of its theological reflection, as well as the foundation for its

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<sup>68</sup> Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation*, 1-5.

hermeneutic of liberation.<sup>69</sup> Black theology also provides an open view of oppression based on “class,” “gender,” and “global capitalism.”<sup>70</sup> Blackness is the symbol engaged in theological reflection and should not be condensed to the element of skin color. Therefore, black theologians have been able to address other forms of oppression while remaining focused on the symbolic center.<sup>71</sup>

Justin Ukpong, a Nigerian New testament scholar, states that the western biblical interpretation tradition is intellectualist while the African tradition is existentialist by existentialist; he means limited to a particular social and cultural context.<sup>72</sup> He explains African readings are existential and of a pragmatic nature, and contextual in approach. They are interested in relating the biblical message to contemporary and existential question and do not claim to a universal perspective. Valid for its context and possibly valid for other context as well interpretation, according to Ukpong is the stage upon which an ethics of transformation is erected, which is effected by ordinary people. Ordinary people according to Ukpong are “a social class, the common people in contradistinction to the elite and, as he goes on to say it’s the ordinary people that are accorded the epistemological privilege this the Bible is not neutral.”<sup>73</sup>

The ethical perspective recognizes that the bible is not a neutral text, and so it must be read critically in light of its historical conditioning to gain a better understanding of the context in which it was written. It also requires gaining the appropriate meaning for the context as it relates to the poor. Ukpong says that three elements are involved in this reading process: the people, reading from their perspective, and using their frame of reference.<sup>74</sup> “He advocates biblical scholars reading with ordinary people as a means of

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<sup>69</sup> Brown, *Blackening of the Bible*, 17.

<sup>70</sup> Brown, *Blackening of the Bible*, 17.

<sup>71</sup> Brown, *Blackening of the Bible*, 12.

<sup>72</sup> Brown, *Blackening of the Bible*, 12.

<sup>73</sup> Brown, *Blackening of the Bible*, 12.

<sup>74</sup> Brown, *Blackening of the Bible*, 12.

producing critical reading that retain the privileged insight of the marginalized, in his view.”<sup>75</sup>

Out of the three approaches discussed, Ukpong best describes context and the role it plays in interpretation. He says the reading operation itself is not just the application of a reading method to read a text; it involves the implementation of the regime of the method in a particular way directed by particular interests and concerns of both the method and readers. Readers most often unconsciously, go to text with questions in mind reflecting on the unconscious interest embedded over the years as well as some expectation derived from the pre-understanding. They are influenced by their status in society, denominational affiliation, and reflection of gender as indicated in the text.<sup>76</sup>

Ukpong argues that the “purpose of any legitimate form of interpretation is to appropriate a text’s meaning in a contemporary sociocultural context.”<sup>77</sup> Therefore, the bible is viewed to address and speak to contemporaries through historical context to provide liberation to those that are oppressed. The act of reading the Bible with ordinary people has as its goal the transformation of readers and their society.<sup>78</sup>

In Peter J. Paris’ book, C. Eric Lincoln paints a vivid picture of the power of the black church by indicating that the black church and the black community is one in the same.<sup>79</sup>

The church is the spiritual face of the black community, and whether one is a ‘church member’ or ‘not’ is irrelevant in the assessment of the importance and meaning of the black church. The black church is in some sense a ‘universal church’ claiming and representing all blacks out of a long tradition that looks back to the time when there was only the black church to bear witness to ‘who’ or ‘what’ a man was as he stood at the bar of his community. The church still

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<sup>75</sup> Brown, *Blackening of the Bible*, 12-13.

<sup>76</sup> Brown, *Blackening of the Bible*, 13.

<sup>77</sup> Brown, *Blackening of the Bible*, 14

<sup>78</sup> Brown, *Blackening of the Bible*, 14.

<sup>79</sup> Peter J. Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches* (New York, NY: Fortress Press, 1994), 8.

accepts a broad-gauge responsibility for the black community inside and outside its formal community.<sup>80</sup>

In conclusion, the goal of the research is to assist in identifying methodologies of liberating black young adults by maintaining employment and education, establishing new relationships, overcoming emotion and addiction problems, building careers, and developing in support of constructing responsibility and accountability to God, family and community. It is also to ensure the existence of effective adult services that are developmentally and culturally appropriate. Finally, it is to address system fragmentation, so the mental health, education, justice, and other systems can work together to service young adults' best interests through the theology of preaching and worshiping, practical theology and existentialist theology.

It brings together the faith relationship with Jesus Christ, spirituality, God's presence, the church's theological reflection throughout the community, hermeneutic of God's world, a sense of participation in God's mission, the ultimate purpose and meaning of the church and relates all these to the cognate disciplines of missiology. Theology serves to question, clarify, integrate, and expand the presuppositions of the various cognate disciplines of missiology. Theology enables ministries to understand how people live together in groups, compare one culture to another, and perceive psyches of various people within culture. Understandings of contextualized ministry (evangelism, church planting and development, leadership training) help missionaries develop theologically focused, yet contextually appropriate strategies. These strategies guide ministries to teach unbelievers and incorporate new Christians into communities of faith.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> Paris, *The Social Teaching of the Black Churches*, 8.

<sup>81</sup> Gailyn Van Rheenen, "MR #20: The Theological Foundations of Missiology," accessed April 26, 2016, <http://www.missiology.org/mr-20-the-theological-foundations-of-missiology/>.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS**

This chapter addresses the problems facing the black community with a prophetic call for liberation by examining contemporary approaches to black young adult issues, focusing on the how to liberate black young adults from the chains of systematic oppression within the Edisto Island, South Carolina community and nationwide. The focus areas of systemic oppression and the cry for liberation surrounding these areas are poor parenting, spiritual disconnection, education disparity, substance abuse, mental health disorder, lack of sense of direction, unintended pregnancy, unemployment, low marriage rates, absent fathers, single parenting, poverty, criminal behavior, and incarceration.

In addition, this chapter provides professional expertise dialogue to compare and contrast ideas drawn from a wide range of contributors such as clergy, medical practitioners, politicians, educators, psychologist, substances abuse counselors, family and marriage counselors, researchers, administrators, parents, young people, and social workers in an effort to gain awareness and support to liberate African American systematic oppression in this country. By lifting oppression in young black adults and their community we can achieve positive outcomes across religion, family, social, and employment, education, and community surroundings. Through a range of theoretical

disciplines, the complex challenges and expectations of young adult's liberation will be addressed in the transition from childhood to young adult life.

The areas of discipline are ministry practice, education, anthropology, sociology, economics, and political science. These disciplines will be discussed in an effort to address the systematic oppression problems while developing a model of ministry that will bring an end to systematic oppression within the Edisto Island community and nationwide.

### **Ministry Practice**

Ministry practice discipline is an academic discipline that examines and reflects on religious practices in order to understand the theology that is enacted in those practices and in order to consider how theological theory and theological practices can be more fully aligned, changed, or improved.

C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya posit that some of the most relevant work done in the *Black Church in the African American Experience*, in regard to church growth studies, have pointed to the phenomenon of a growing sector of in church, unchurched black people, especially among black males. Scant attention has been paid to the rise of a Neo-Pentecostal or charismatic movement that has contributed to the phenomenon of church growth among some black church denominations.<sup>1</sup>

Neo- Pentecostalism in the black church tends to draw upon the reservoir of the black folk religious tradition which stressed enthusiastic worship and Spirit filled

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<sup>1</sup> C. Eric Lincoln and Lawrence H. Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1990), 385.

experience, which appeals to the current movement in its emphasis upon a deeper spirituality, and the need for a second blessing of the Holy Spirit. The most significant fact about this movement in the A.M.E. Church has been the enormous church growth it has produced in almost all of the churches associated with it. For example, when Rev. John R. Bryant took over the Bethel A.M.E. Church of Baltimore in the mid-1970s, the church had about five hundred members; within ten years its membership had grown to over six thousand members, making it's the largest A.M.E. congregation in the nation.<sup>2</sup> Besides Bethel, several of the largest A.M.E. churches in the country associated with the movement were pastured by Bryant's protégés.

Another characteristic of the Neo-Pentecostal movement in the A.M.E. Church concerns its curious combination of a deep Pentecostal spiritual piety and the A.M.E. tradition of involvement in progressive politics and political activism. The pastors as well as the laity associated with movement churches are caught up in the most intense, enthusiastic worship featuring the traditional Pentecostal phenomena referred to above.<sup>3</sup>

According to Bishop William Phillips Deveau, a vision for the small church such as Calvary A.M.E. Church on Edisto Island South Carolina should address the relationship between maintaining congregation and the command from Jesus Christ to expand his church. Failure to address these problems, signals a lost opportunity to strengthen churches and fulfill Christ's mandate. Adequate capacity is simply defined as having the requisite human (members) and material resource to support and sustain the

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<sup>2</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 385.

<sup>3</sup> Lincoln and Mamiya, *The Black Church in the African American Experience*, 385-387.

church. For small churches, the crucial issue in building capacity is acquiring, sustaining, supporting, and strengthening qualified pastoral leadership.<sup>4</sup>

Addressing church growth through technology ministry, Lance Watson states,

One scripture that has become increasingly important to guide our understanding of how we should function in culture; how we should think about technology; how we should construct worship experience; how we should determine the language we use in communication in the context of culture is 1 Corinthians 9.<sup>5</sup>

In that periscope, one of the greatest missionaries in the world, the Apostle Paul writes to a church located in an urban center; a church struggling with how to engage the culture that surrounded them and utilize the opportunities and advantages that their culture presented to them to advance the ministry of Jesus.<sup>6</sup>

In 1 Corinthians 9:19, Paul says,

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, so that I may share in its blessings. (In 1 Corinthians 9:19)

The practical point of Paul's teaching was that as leaders and servants in the ministry of Christ, in humility, we are to do all we can so that as many people as possible can come into a life changing relationship with Christ. Paul says that using every means possible at every possible moment, he wants to reach every possible person with the timeless truth of

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<sup>4</sup> William D. Watley, *Doing Church: A Practical Guide, by Those Who Do It* Volume Two, (Newark, NJ: New Season Press, 2010), 90-99.

<sup>5</sup> Watley, *Doing Church*, 139.

<sup>6</sup> Watley, *Doing Church*, 139.



the gospel; so that in love, we might enable him or her to build a relationship with God through Jesus Christ. This is the theological foundation that under girds our approach as to how we use technology, it is to be employed as part of the continuing redemptive mission of Christ to reach people with the love of God.

Technology has the potential to improve every aspect of your church. With limited resource, time and money alike, you should use technology strategically and where it will have the most impact. Although the challenges may be numerous, there are several areas where technology can be deployed for really significant benefits:

### *Worship*

It is possible to use a variety of different applications to enhance a worship experience; from providing lyrics to songs, text for teaching and preaching, video snippets to illustrate or set up messages.

### *Finance*

Stewardship reporting technology can help maintain a high level of accountability. Online giving is a simpler way for many church members to give anytime, anywhere, with multiple ways and means to accept, track, and manage donation. By communicating on a personal level, it engages members and keeps them connected to the church. This technology also recruits servants, trains them, coordinates them and deploys them with the use of the right technology. Social networking is changing and will continue to change the way that we live.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Watley, *Doing Church*, 139, 149-151.

In addressing church growth through social justice, Reginald T. Jackson states,

In the Old Testament, God called Jeremiah to be a prophet (Jeremiah 1:5). Perhaps his life and ministry would not have been so uproarious if God had only called him to priestly responsibilities. He made Jeremiah His spokesman, to speak to the power that be, and the people in His name on issues and matters of that day. Jeremiah is critically important to anyone in the ordained ministry because he reminds us of something very important, and that is that we are called not only to priestly but also prophetic ministry. Prophetic ministry is the pursuit of social justice as part of an ordain minister's calling, as well as pastoral responsibility. Prophetic ministry is not limited to speaking to those in positions of power or public pronouncements; often it is speaking truth in private or behind the scenes. Speaking for God on issues of justice that impact the people and communities we are called to serve is a priority. Certainly, it is not part of "doing church" but is equally as important in calling out political and secular leaders during certain situations in our communities.<sup>8</sup>

In the context of religious education, Kenneth H. Hill states,

The A.M.E. Church was an important partner with those who sought liberation from oppression due to racism in American society. The A.M.E. Church has a history of prophetic witness that began more than two hundred years ago when Richard Allen walked out of the White Methodist church in Philadelphia, followed upon the heels of the civil rights movement. The period (1954-68) was represented by the Brown legal decision for the desegregation of education and the nonviolent effort of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. In fact, the A.M.E. Church became a lightning rod for the African American Church Tradition both in the search for roots and the quest for social justice. Nevertheless, this denomination has been a source for comfort and healing for a long-suffering people.<sup>9</sup>

So the people of the African Methodist tradition were a proud people who saw that the practice of faith was to be wedded with not only civic participation but with addressing systems that crippled people. There was inherent in these actions a liberation motif.

Tithing has always been a calling of the black church throughout its history even when the overwhelming number of members lived in poverty. Gregory Ingram addresses the importance and subject of tithing:

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<sup>8</sup> Watley, *Doing Church*, 178-181.

<sup>9</sup> Kenneth H. Hill, *Religious Education in the African American Tradition A Comprehensive Introduction* (St. Louis: MO, Chalice Press, 2007), 121,136-144.

the fact of the matter is stewardship deals with people and not purses. The teachings of Old and New Testaments affirm this. In light of the misconception and in congruencies, the principle obligation of the church today, with respect to Christian financial stewardship, is to clarify its position on a life of giving, so that its members will better understand what Christian stewardship is all about a way of living: everything we are, everything we do, everything we spend, every moment we consume. When people view tithing and Christian stewardship as fulfillment of their covenant with God, they also view giving as lifetime pattern. A life of giving ultimately leads us into a life of faith, excitement, and commitment to the Lord that results in a person's life mirroring God's willingness to give His most precious gift to others, Jesus Christ, as a ransom for our sins (John 3:16).<sup>10</sup>

This understanding and perspective free the believer up of a constant battle of how much, or how little, should I contribute to the church.

Lora-Ellen McKinney addresses the educational task of the black church. She stresses that its role is to teach its membership the theological underpinnings of a faith heritage that made real the hope of the Christian gospel for black people. Essentially, this is the mission of Christian education and the focus of evangelism in the Black Church. Christian Education is, above all else, a process that helps a community of believers understand theology, learn Christian history, reinforce personal decision to live for Christ, and make commitments to the internal and outreach ministries of the local church.<sup>11</sup>

To fully understand and access the love of Christ, we must know him. To know him we must study him and learn, through direct instruction, private study, and corporate worship, the meaning and import of his word, in its historical form and as it applies to our daily lives. It is also essential that we, as African American, learn that Christianity is

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<sup>10</sup> Watley, *Doing Church*, 212-220.

<sup>11</sup> Lorne Ellen McKinney, *Christian Education in the African American Church* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 2003), 2.

not a slave faith, some shameful remnant of our unlawful servitude of America's shores. The purpose of Christian education is to provide biblically based programs, resources, and support within the church and community that will meet needs, transform lives, and prepare individuals for every good Christian service. Christian education seeks to develop in its learners a strong belief, dedication to, and knowledge of Jesus Christ so they can better know him, reflect his image in the world, and bring others to him.<sup>12</sup>

The goal of African American pastoral care is to adequately address the critical care needs of African Americans from the perspective of poor African Americans, to ensure the survival and liberation of African Americans as a whole. In other words, pastoral care for African Americans requires care giving that addresses the crisis that we face in terms of survival as a people and liberation from all kinds of oppression. Pastoral care of African Americans should provide nurture. Although the word "care" is synonymous with the word "nurture," pastoral care is healing, sustaining, guiding and restorative altogether. Pastoral care giving in the African American church context should result in empowerment. To be empowered would be to find ways to give power to those disenfranchised, to enable persons to resist oppression on their own and to take authority over their lives.<sup>13</sup> In the end, practical ministry centered on church growth is to have God's will done. As a pastor through preaching, teaching, and ministries, we seek to win and grow people for Jesus Christ, to make disciples.

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<sup>12</sup> McKinney, *Christian Education in the African American Church*, 2-5.

<sup>13</sup> Carroll A. Watkins Ali, *Survival & Liberation Pastoral Theology in African American Context* (St. Louis, MI: Chalice Press, 1999), 135-141.

### **Education Discipline Model**

Education discipline is the study of knowledge that is taught and researched as part of higher education. Public institutions and individual experiences affect education and its outcomes. It is mostly concerning with the public schooling systems of modern industrial society, including the expansion of high, further adult, and continuing education. Education is needed in fulfilling society's various needs such as norms, values, and skills to function in society. In society these values include respect for others and respect for authority.

African American liberation of learning came out of systematic oppression to keep blacks from becoming literate. Laws and customs made it a crime for enslaved men and women to learn or teach others to read and write. And yet, slave narratives uniformly recount the intensity of the slaves' and ex-slave desire for literacy, the barrier they encountered in becoming literate, and what they were willing to endure in order to become literate. Even the threat of beating, amputation, or death did not quell the slaves' desire for literacy. For the slaves, literacy was more than a symbol of freedom; it was freedom. It affirmed their humanity, their personhood. To be able to read and write was an intrinsic good weapon in the slave's struggle for freedom. While learning to read was an individual achievement, it was fundamentally a communal act. For the slaves, literacy affirmed not only their individual freedom but also the freedom of their people.

Becoming literate obliged one to teach others. Learning and teaching were two side of the

same coin, part of the same moment. Literacy was not something you kept for yourself; it was to be passed on to others, to the community. Literacy was something to share.<sup>14</sup>

Crystal Kuykendall states,

In spite of our long-term preoccupation with education equality (count the years since the passage of the 1954 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*), there is still widespread unequal and unjust treatment of some different and diverse student in many of our education institutions. This apparent disdain of some for diversity and the corresponding low tolerance of others for difference are reflected not only in some teacher attitudes and behavior towards students, but also in the content of classroom instruction, the books being read, the policies and practices of school and school districts, the role models most commonly present to student, the way students are treated in classroom interactions, and the assignment of certain student to particular instructional program.<sup>15</sup>

Inequality in too many classrooms, find that blacks and Hispanics are still being seen as passive, docile, dependent, non-enterprising, inferior, and less attractive than whites.

Children often receive the message (through classroom instruction and teacher behavior) that all a racial minority has to do to succeed in school is adopt the requisite culture of the dominant society.

One study found that children have been taught to emulate and pay tribute to those who conform to middle-class, mainstream cultural standards of heroism. Individuals whose heroism involved fighting oppression, preserving cultural integrity, or combating social injustices in ways that were not sanctioned by mainstream culture were not to be lauded or, in most instances, even discussed in most school curricula. Many educators still respond to students of color who are different in predictable ways, they

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<sup>14</sup> Theresa Perry, Steele, Claude, III Hilliard, Asa, *Young Promoting High Achievement Gifted Among African-American Students and Black* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 2003), 11-14.

<sup>15</sup> Crystal Kuykendall, *From Rage to Hope: Strategies for Reclaiming Black & Hispanic Students*, Second Edition (Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree Press, 2004), 13.

isolate them, ignore them, retain them, suspend them, expel them, and in far too many instances, they fail to love them or teach them.<sup>16</sup>

An effective educator generally must have an attitude brimming with confidence and encouragement. With the right attitude, with a fond appreciation of the individuality, uniqueness, and ability of every student, a teacher can ensure student success. A few student differences most likely to impact teacher attitudes and expectation are the following: prior achievement, socioeconomic status, language ability, and race/ethnicity.<sup>17</sup>

Promoting lifelong success through education by teachers dealing effectively with student differences can augment and strengthen the academic self-image and motivation so vital to lifelong success. By developing a more positive attitude about the potential of diverse students, you can enhance the confidence of children who have had a slow start, thus making the achievement of all students your main priority. There should be a willingness to explore proven alternatives to tracking and ability grouping while refraining from using stereotypical and negative labels. Educators should teach students to speak and write standard English while accepting their cultural dialect as another legitimate form of expression, while looking past physical attributes, gender, and race to find the untapped potential in your student, and help colleagues respond to diversity and student difference in a more positive manner.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Kuykendall, *From Rage to Hope*, 13.

<sup>17</sup> Kuykendall, *From Rage to Hope*, 13-14.

<sup>18</sup> Kuykendall, *From Rage to Hope*, 11-29.

Marshall McLuhan states,

the rates of poverty, victimization, and psychiatric disorder, including depression, appear to be on the rise among all children and are even more pronounced in children who underachieve in school. Too many of our children are growing up alienated and angry, without adequate intellectual skills, unprepared to perform even the lowest-paying jobs. Thus, a good foundation in basic academic skills is not only important, it is essential for all of our children. It is a parent's job to be the manager and, eventually, to help the child learn to self-manage the problem. To be effective at this job, however, parents must first understand how children learn.<sup>19</sup>

Hence, parents should be lifelong learners and learn alongside of their students. They should also become familiar on how to navigate the educational system dealing with teachers, principals, school superintendents and school boards.

African American students deserve a high-quality education from a political prospective. The mandate of *Brown v. Board of Education* has yet to be fulfilled. Research has shown that for children of African American and Latino descent, access to high quality public education remains a challenge. In fact, American education is rife with problems, starting with the gaping difference between white student and student of color. More than sixty years after *Brown vs. Board of Education*, school systems in the United States are separate and unequal. Today, the vast majority of schools remain highly segregated with African American students more likely to attend schools with less qualified teachers who are more likely to be underpaid and who have a higher likelihood of not being certified. Additionally, these schools, which traditionally have served the most vulnerable populations, have a long history of not receiving adequate funding.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Sam Goldstein and Nancy Mather, *Overcoming Underachieving: An Action Guide to Helping Your Child Succeed in School*. (New York, NY: John Wiley & Sons, Inc, 1998), 6-11.

<sup>20</sup> "African American Students Deserve A High Quality Education," accessed October 12, 2017, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/news/2017/02/28/427028/african-american-students-deserve-a-high-quality-education/>.



### **The Discipline of Anthropology/Sociology**

Anthropology is the study of the forms and function of human diversity in the present and the past. It is an intellectually exciting discipline dealing with all aspects of human behavior, social and biological, past and present, a broad focus well suited to today's global integrated world. These include formulating and testing hypotheses, gathering extensive bodies of data, and analyzing these data in the light of theoretical models. Anthropology is the most humanistic of the sciences and the most scientific of the humanities. Anthropology is an especially important discipline in a time when it is increasingly imperative to understand the nature of cultural diversity, the effects of globalization, and the interconnection nature of human society, past and present.<sup>21</sup>

The starting point for beginning to understand the contemporary African American family is an African past that is coordinated with an American past. The proper casting of black family context is essential for clear presentation of an African American identity. We must not be confused by the fact that Africa was not regarded as a homeland with a respected history as the continent of Europe was. Culturally, Africans and Africa were considered soulless objects for plunder. We must begin with Africa, the motherland of the black Diaspora. In the trans-Atlantic trade, Europe and America took, in the course of four centuries, unnumbered tons of gold, uncounted shiploads of ivory, and millions upon millions of black men and women. To the plunderers, Africa was the "Gold Coast,"

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<sup>21</sup> "The Discipline of Anthropology," October 17, 2017, <https://anthropology.columbian.gwu.edu/discipline-anthropology>.

the “Ivory Coast,” the “Slave Coast.” But it was never a community of people deserving Christian recognition and concern.<sup>22</sup>

The coordination of our past with our present will offer a future of wonderful possibilities. Many would suggest that the spirit of America was more benevolent than the shapers of America. But we should not be caught up in the illusion that we were present in the heart of the American idea as beneficiary participants. Africans were never thought to be equal partners in the development of the nation. The faith and egocentrism of the founders would not give room to the full humanity of African as co-laborers. Instead, the relational dynamics made us outcasts as colonists began to assert their American identity.

This country has produced a culture founded on the social ideas of liberty and justice, while all social interactions were being governed by survival needs. The stated mediating principle for living the social ideas of liberty and justice were equality, even as it was recognized that this was the land of promise and opportunity. That guiding hope, however, did not include the African who came to America. For reasons of race, color, sex, gender, and creed, Africans were denied the expression of an identity supported by the American ideas of liberty, justice, and equality before God and others.<sup>23</sup>

Lee H. Butler Jr. asserts that life is most fulfilling when it is lived out relationally. Spirituality purports to unify all things, yet our Western practices have split out spiritual functioning into the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the mundane. This also applies to our understanding of sexuality in relation to spirituality. The splitting of the

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<sup>22</sup> Lee H. Butler, Jr., *Liberating Our Dignity Saving Our Souls* (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2006), 5-6.

<sup>23</sup> Butler, Jr., *Liberating Our Dignity Saving Our Souls*, 5-10, 108, 119, 137, 141, 173.

two has meant the splitting of our lives. This splitting of spirituality and sexuality has a devastating impact upon African American relationships. African Americans have been regarded as being without religion, spirit, or morality that is, without spirituality. As African American men and women in relationship with each other, we find ourselves in a peculiar and precarious condition. We live during a time that says affirmation action is no longer necessary. In this era of spiritual seekers searching for spiritual direction and new ways to understand spirituality, it is extremely important that African American perspectives and approaches guide the conversation for African Americans. Our lives have been influenced by less than helpful interpretations of spirituality and sexuality. We take great pride in declaring that we do not make separation, but the fact is, we separate many aspects of our lives. The separation of spirituality and sexuality is no exception. It is imperative that we end this mind-body split that we experience through the splitting of spirituality and sexuality. We must re-create our relationships. We have been socialized as men and women to be unequal players in relationship. Rather than giving one another full support, we support each other selectively. The basic goal for our relationship must be to become equal partners concerned and committed to one another in an open and trusting way. As African Americans, our relationships must be more fulfilling by rejecting what divides and separates us the most, which is forsaking our communal identity as an American people of African descent.<sup>24</sup>

African American folk healing may be defined as the creatively developed range of activities and ideas that aim to balance and renew life. To explore African American

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<sup>24</sup> Lee H. Butler Jr. *A Loving Home Caring for African American Marriages and Families* (Cleveland, OH: The Pilgrim Press, 2000), 1-5, 16, 17, 48, 55, 141.

folk healing is to open up a vista of black American concepts about life, bodies, death, and nature. Such concepts may have spiritual reference, may move into political action, or may serve as the homegrown analysis of society. To create and maintain such ideas, structured from African cultural orientations, American pragmatism, and information from other cultures, attests the savvy of African Americans as a people. Discerning these meanings also entails tangling with layers of racism and centuries of separation that created limited, unreal images of Black Americans.

African American folk healing encompasses more than the physical dimension of the human person. The spiritual is seen as a realm in need of potential healing and can be considered sick, as indicated in the spiritual “Balm in Gilead,” Spirits also interact with the realm of the living, evidencing a cosmological view in which life continues after the death of the body, and the soul of the person continues to be involved in the world, sometimes for good, sometime for ill. As another dimension of relationality, spirit possession in its many forms is a dramatic example of relationships between humans and spirits.

Through slavery and Jim Crow, black bodies were socially constructed in negative frameworks to justify their oppression. Black Americans countered this dehumanization with other constructions drawn from a cultural base that retains African cognitive orientation. African American folk healing, with its aims of balancing relationships and renewing life has provided a haven for cultural and intellectual development. African American folk healing is in dialogue with other American cultures and tradition; new forms of commerce impact it; and alternative medicines influence it. African American approaches to the body, wellness, and healing are deeply linked to

expressions of spirituality and faith. At its heart, African American folk healing reflects a spirituality of healing. This spirituality of healing helps African Americans to envision new lives for themselves and to dream of new futures for the country. It is the difference between a people merely surviving and one finding ways to transcend centuries of oppression.<sup>25</sup>

### **Economics Discipline**

The discipline of economics is the social science that studies the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and service. Economics focuses on the behavior and interactions of economic agent and how economies work. Microeconomics analyzes basic elements in the economy, meaning aggregated production, consumption, saving, and investing and issues affecting it including unemployment of resources, inflation, economic growth, and public policies that address these issues.

Inequality means one thing if it describes the difference between poverty and middle-class status or the affluent and the superrich. Research has pinpointed strong relationships between family wealth and children's educational outcomes, which connect to lifetime earnings from employment; children from the highest-income family were eight times more likely than children from low-income families to obtain a bachelor's degree by age twenty-four. Some politicians, policymakers and liberals often propose wedlock as a pathway out of poverty and a route to mobility and well-being. Marriage as a silver bullet solution to poverty remains a deep-rooted meme and political mainstay.

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<sup>25</sup> Stephanie Y. Mitchem, *African American Folk Healing* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2007), 11, 26, 163, 166-167.

However, it is true that single-parent family are more likely to fall below the income and asset poverty line than two-parent families. But this is a function not of marriage itself but of the increased likelihood of two incomes. More adult earners mean more income.

Place of residence is an important part of obtaining wealth. Owning a home builds housing wealth, which by far accounts for the largest wealth reservoir for middle and lower-middle-class family. Two thirds of net wealth held by the middle sixty percent of family is home equity. Those families that increased their wealth between 1998 and 2010 had access to employment that provides wealth-building benefits such as matched defined contribution retirement accounts of traditional pension, health insurance, education credits or investment, severance pay, and disability insurance. This kind of employment capital is key to building a wealth infrastructure. African American workers continue to be concentrated toward jobs that do not offer various wealth-building benefits. While sixty five percent of white workers had retirement plans in 2009, only fifty five percent of black workers' employers offered such plans, reflecting both a changing economic structure.<sup>26</sup>

The importance of occupations and work sectors to wealth escalators and the significant difference race makes in how wealth is institutionally structured is through employment.

Black families were more likely to confront a range of different negative life events, from unemployment to a health crisis. Debt also negatively influenced families' capacity to save setting them on a downward path. Credit card balances, payday loans, mortgages, health-care debt, student loan debt, car loans result in low credit beacon score.

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<sup>26</sup> Thomas M. Shapiro, *Toxic Inequality* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2017), 45-46.

One solution to combat this form of economic oppression is the Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program, a first-time home buyer program which one can buy and later sell to purchase a larger suburban home with financing. FSS helps people move to housing stability.

The inheritance advantage, money passed from generation to generation, impact in transforming lives is harder to quantify. Inherited assets give those who receive them a huge head start in life and provide incalculable, unearned advantages; inheritance belies the idea that people enjoy generally equal opportunities and rise or fall on merit alone. A good man leaves an inheritance to his children's children (Proverbs 13: 22).

Two principles must anchor change for inequality for black families: wealth-building and racial justice. The United States invests hugely in home ownership, retirement security, and education because these goods benefit the largest number of people in the largest wealthy way possible while strengthening society. Therefore, the policy design process must candidly incorporate the goal of racial equity. Applying such a racial justice filter to both new and existing policies can ensure that they foster equitable wealth building in communities of color, both avoiding past policy errors and countering ongoing, often hidden discrimination.

Instead of seeking universal eligibility, however, we should pursue universal goals. While providing benefits to those eligible, this approach disproportionately touches the most disadvantaged and provides results most likely to enhance retirement security and close the racial wealth gap. Politicians and conservatives have taught the nation cannot afford the policies needed to produce a more equitable society. That is false. We choose how we spend, and we spend over \$600 billion on the military and \$400 billion

on wealth generating provision in the current tax code. We must move towards policy that improve family economic mobility like Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS), greatly assisting participating families in moving from subsidized rents and poor neighborhoods to more stable communities, housing security and possibly home ownership. Any agenda for change must strengthen housing and community stability for families, emphasize quality jobs with higher wages and benefits, ensure retirement security, provide quality education, encourage saving, and reform tax policy to foster both equity and mobility.<sup>27</sup>

Sheryll Cashin states,

we fought a revolution to free ourselves from tyranny damaging to the pursuit of happiness, and we must keep fighting to make America fair for all. The Declaration of Independence true for slaves, Native Americans, women, indentured servants, and white men were created equal, but in practice the founders sanctioned racial and economic hierarchy so that men of influence could come to agreement on a new national government. When the Supreme Court sanctioned slavery and the lowly, denigrated position of Africans in America in the Dred Scott case, Frederick Douglass responded not by attacking the Constitution or its drafters but by interpreting it in light of the Declaration of Independence. Its values and rhetoric bore the true meaning of the Constitution's drafters, Douglas argued. 'We the people' necessarily meant all of 'the human inhabitants of the United States,' not only white people, not only citizens or legal voters or the privileged classes, but all men and women in the land.<sup>28</sup>

It is imperative for a dialogue to take place concerning economics which has already begun in the discussion of "a living wage" movement along with new policies to address the education, employment and housing problems that exist in America today.

Systems are rigged against all middle-income and poor people. Access to an excellent public school depends heavily on your ability to buy your way into an affluent neighborhood. Access to employment sometimes depends on who you know and having

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<sup>27</sup> Shapiro, *Toxic Inequality*, 25-39, 46, 55-58, 249, 188, 190.

<sup>28</sup> Sheryll Cashin, *Place nor Race: A New Vision of Opportunity in America* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 2014), 109.



skills that you may not be able to afford to acquire. Social mobility in the land of opportunity has ground to a halt. Meanwhile, without a strong multiracial majority, there is little chance of enacting sound policies that might correct the underlying structures that create racial and economic inequality. There are plenty of common-sense ideas about how to create more, not less, opportunities in this country. What we need is a politics of fairness, one in which people of color and the white people who are open to them moving past racial resentment to form an alliance of the sane. One first step would be to base affirmative action upon structural disadvantage, not race. Working-class whites need a clear signal that they are welcome to enter the multiracial tent, and this would be one such signal.

Throughout American history, economic elites used racial categories and racism to drive a wedge between working-class whites and people of color they might ally with. In the colonial era, indentured servitude gave way to white freedom and black slavery so that white servants no longer had incentive to join blacks in revolt, as they did in Bacon's Rebellion. In the late nineteenth century, Jim Crow laws proliferated after a biracial farmers' alliance threatened to change unfair financial policies imposed by elites. And the GOP devised a cynical, race-coded Southern strategy that broke up the multiracial alliance that made the New Deal possible. Given this history and its current manifestations, intentional efforts are sorely needed to begin to rebuild trust among "we the people" and to recapture a sense of collective will to protect the common good.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Sheryll Cashin, *Place nor Race: A New Vision of Opportunity in America*, 109-112.

### Political Science Discipline

In a post-Civil War world, decade after decade, African Americans have done their best to elicit sympathy for their struggle against systemic white racism. In explaining the state-sponsored second-class life under Jim Crow degradation, along with the domestic terrorism that resulted in thousands of African Americans throughout the United States being lynched for the capricious of reasons, African Americans pointed at the racism and said, “Look.”<sup>30</sup>

Today, systemic and institutional racism still plague African Americans, long after the “Colored Only” signs have been taken down. African American are primarily the ones burdened with the task of fixing a race problem they did not produce or perpetuate, while white American continues to say, “I don’t see it.”<sup>31</sup>

Even when forced to confront overt racism, white American has been slow, reluctant, and dishonest in recounting that memory, a memory that is deep in their guts, a memory that they know is true. As individuals, white American have learned that they can deflect, defuse, and delude as a way to maintain the charade.

As the unelected governing body for the purpose of evaluating the validity of racism, white American consistently discounts black witnesses to racism as unreliable, as in you’re playing the race card, and the falsifying echoes are often those black sophists who ply their trade of Fox News, or for the Republican Party, eager to comfort the uninformed. Their message? No matter what authentic black voices say, nothing about white racism is worth taking up space in the collective white American memory: “Black

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<sup>30</sup> Lawrence Ross, *Blackballed: The Black + White Politics of Race on America’s Campuses* (New York, NY: St. Martin’s Press, 2015), 2

<sup>31</sup> Ross, *Blackballed: The Black + White Politics of Race on America’s Campuses*, 2.

people who talk about racism are just trying to be the victim. And that in itself is a form of racism”, “Everything is just fine. Just fine”; Just don’t think about racism, and don’t think about color. Feel free to maintain the amnesia.”<sup>32</sup>

Most African American live in a world where white racism is an omnipresent entity, an obstacle they attempt to navigate while becoming highly successful, exceeding mediocre, or abject failures. But pointing out the realities of white racism to America as a black person who lives them, and then having that reality dismissed unheard, logically makes black people question their sanity. When racial inequities around housing, education, jobs, wealth, health care, and a thousand other categories are quantifiably tilted towards the benefit of white America, then because of overtly racist public policy, why did 2013 Rasmussen poll show that forty-nine percent of white Republicans viewed African American as not themselves or other white American, as racist? It’s intentional delusion.<sup>33</sup>

Today, the war on Drug has given birth to a system of mass incarceration that governs not just a small fraction of a racial or ethnic minority but entire communities of color. The legal rules that grant police the discretion and authority to stop, interrogate, and search anyone, anywhere, provided they get “consent” from the targeted individual. It also examined the legal framework that affords prosecutors extraordinary discretion to charge or not charge, plea bargain or not, and load up defendants with charges carrying the threat of harsh mandatory sentence, in order to force guilty pleas, even in cases in which the defendants may well be innocent. The rules have made it possible for law

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<sup>32</sup> Ross, *Blackballed: The Black + White Politics of Race on America’s Campuses*, 2-3.

<sup>33</sup> Ross, *Blackballed The Black + White Politics of Race on America’s on Campuses*, 2-3.

enforcement agencies to boost dramatically their rates of drug arrest and conviction, even in communities where drug crime is stable or declining. Viewed as a whole, the relevant research by cognitive and social psychologist to date suggest that racial bias in the drug war was inevitable, once a public consensus was constructed by political and media elites that drug crime is black and brown.<sup>34</sup>

Ending the drug war is no simple task, however. It cannot be accomplished through a landmark court decision, an executive order, or single stroke of the presidential pen. Since 1982, the war has raged like a forest fire set with a few matches and gallon of gasoline. What began as an audacious federal program has spread to every state in the nation and nearly every city. It has infected law enforcement activities on roads, sidewalks, highways, train stations, airports, and the nation's border. The war has effectively shredded portions of the U.S. Constitution eliminating Fourth Amendment protections once deemed inviolate and it has militarized policing practices taken together with laws that specifically discriminate against drug offenders in employment, housing, and public benefits have relegated the majority of black men in urban areas across the United States to a permanent second-class status.<sup>35</sup>

If we hope to end this system of control. All of the financial incentive granted to law enforcement to arrest poor black and brown people for drugs offended must be revoked, Federal grant money for drug enforcement must end; drug forfeiture laws must be stripped from the books; racial profiling must be eradicated; the concentration of drug bust in poor communities of color must cease; and the transfer of military equipment and aid to local law enforcement agencies waging the drug war must come to a screeching halt.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 188.

<sup>35</sup> Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 232.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander, *The New Jim Crow*, 188, 232, 233.

Systematic oppression of racism is a system of advantage based on race. In the United States of America, within this systemic racism, whites are the advantaged and use this system to defend their racial advantage. This system explains how whites have access to better housing, employment, deserving of attention, services, respect, better fit for banking loans, a prospective housing, and even education. This system is how everyday society works based on certain policies, practices and cultured message beyond one's own personal ideology based on racial prejudice. Oppression is the systemic targeting and mistreatment of subordinate groups by the dominant group. This system gives the subordinate group less access to resources or benefits, creating an imbalance of social and economic power. With oppression comes the creation of a subtle devalued and non-accepted ideology of the subordinate group, while at the same time it creates an ideology that the dominant group is superior and more acceptable. Oppression may come in many forms, whether it be political, social, economic, or even psychological. Oppression is a national consciousness of the dominant group and is reinforced through the institutions of society. The "privileged" refers to the advantages gained by the dominant group members. Being white-privileged racially, they receive white privileges in our society. White privilege is the unearned, unconscious or conscious benefits of access to certain resource and social rewards and the power that shape the norms and values of society based on skin color. Racism and privilege seen in the individual sense is seen as overt and purposeful racist act towards subordinate group members. Society today does not see this overt racism like it was seen in the past and therefore it is easier to deny that any injustice exists. It creates a personal blame phenomenon such as Corneal West made concerning black people: blame the lack on the individual and not society oppression,

where it is the individual themselves that cannot get a good job, or better housing, or better education.<sup>37</sup> Instead society like to believe that our hard work got us as far as we have gotten and that it had nothing to do with one's race, gender, or even sexuality. My life experience confirms these patterns as systematic oppression through racism.

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<sup>37</sup> West and Glaude, Jr., *African American Religious Thought*, 436.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **PROJECT ANALYSIS**

#### **Hypothesis**

The hypothesis of this doctoral thesis and research project is predicated on the existing reality that many black young adults are living oppressive lifestyles due to systemic elements of oppression within a post-modern society. These persons have daily struggles: family breakdown, mental health challenges, relationship challenges, inability to obtain or hold a job, substance abuse, education disparity, sexual immorality, unintended pregnancy, criminal justice problems, and poverty. Most of these issues require intervention. This project is expected to create a holiness and moral consciousness through pastoral care teaching, Christian worship and discipleship, political awareness and change in laws, community networking, individual psychotherapy, vocational counseling, outside the walls of the church in efforts to ending oppressive lifestyles in return for tenets of prosperity and moral responsibility to God, family and community.

The hypothesis of this research project is surrounded by the local church parishioners and community members' attention, perception and approach toward helping black youth and young adults living oppressive lifestyles while sharing knowledge and information while working towards liberating systematic oppression challenges that can liberate them. In addition, this project will help equip a wide range of practitioners such

as parents, clergy, faith-based initiative, youth serving professionals, educators, psychologists in support of young adults in setting goals and achieving positive outcomes across religion, family, employment, education, and positive community involvement. In 2007, Robert M. Franklin pointed out that

many poor, black communities ceased to be villages of care and accountability and degraded into corridors of lawlessness, violence, addiction, and self-hatred. Although faith and family continued to be important values for most African American, a growing percentage of people seemed to dismiss them. Worse yet, they seemed to embrace an alternative set of values (uncritical assimilation, individualism, materialism, violence, disinterest in educational excellence, and so forth) that would, in time, threaten to erode past progress and sentence countless young people to lives of misery, violence, and despair.<sup>1</sup>

Since Franklin's assessment of black life in America, things, if anything, seems to have gotten worse.

Robert L. Stivers, Christine E. Gudorf, Alice Frazer Evans and Robert A. Evans in a 2005 case study revealed,

Sin results from deep-seated anxieties and separation from God, self, others, and nature. It issues forth in specific acts that break relationships. Sin is magnified in groups and hardens in institutions. From another angle, sin is the refusal to accept God's gracious power of love, a refusal that leads to a sense of alienation and judgment. While sin runs deep and is universal, it does not necessarily paralyze the moral life. In his person and work Jesus Christ reveals resources for living with integrity in the midst of sin. Jesus identifies God, the source of these resources, as a power that creates inner wholeness and the possibility of right relationships. Primary to most Christian tradition is the affirmation of God's power as love. Love redeems humans from sin and reunites them with others without violating human freedom. Love is a free gift, never a possession, and cannot be obtained by an effort of the will alone. The continuing presence of love in all situations is called the work of the Holy Spirit.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Robert M. Franklin, *Crisis in the Village: Restoring Hope in African American Communities* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press 2007), 18.

<sup>2</sup> Robert L. Stivers, Christine E. Evans, Alice Frazer, and Robert A. Evans, *Christian Ethics: A Case Method Approach Third Edition*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books 2005), 3.



I support the fact that black young adults lack accountability and have degraded into sins of lawlessness, violence, addiction, materialism and disobedience to God by refusing to accept His words. But that love redeems from sin and reunites. This project will develop a model of ministry that will liberate people from oppressive lifestyle. The objective of this project is to establish the attitudes of the members of Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church and the community at large to teach, educate and provide support to black young adult with oppressive lifestyles in achieving a constructive, successful outcome for black youth and young adult.

### *Intervention*

The context of the research project is Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church located in Edisto Island, South Carolina, an island with approximately 2,301 in Charleston County. It was observed that many young adults in the community are living oppressive lifestyle (unemployed, uneducated, substance abuse and in the justice system). These persons are in need of prayer, support and encouragement. Many of these people were family members of active parishioners in the church.<sup>3</sup>

In order to prepare the members of the church to be accepting of persons who had bad oppressive lifestyles, a sermon series was presented focusing on the subject of forgiveness, reconciliation and restoration. There were specific elements that were essential to developing this model. These sermons were delivered from June through August 2018. The sermons generated favorable comments from the members. The first

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<sup>3</sup> US Census Bureau, "Quick Fact – Edisto Island, South Carolina," accessed October 6, 2018, <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/13/1380956.html>.

sermon in the series was on love (I John 4:7-11). This sermon focused on loving one another as God loved us by sending his only Son to save us from our sins.

God shows that true love has absolutely nothing to do with emotions. Love is attitude and action. God shows us his attitude towards us through his actions, chief among them being his sending Jesus so that we have a sacrifice for sins which enable us to live with him forever. In many ways a lot of what we have heard from God's Word throughout the Easter season is on the subject of love. Sin is rebellion against God. Sin is defiance in the face of His commands. Sin is the ultimate in selfishness, doing what I want to do regardless of what God says or how it affects anyone else. Jesus sacrificed his very life to pay for our sins. While he hung on the cross, suspended between heaven and earth, the Father punished Jesus for your sins and mine. He suffered so that you and I would not have to. Jesus gave his life to save ours. That is true love because it is love in action.

The second sermon in the series was on forgiveness (Ephesians 4:32). This sermon focused on church members being able to forgive others as God forgives us. Here God teaches very clearly, that if we consider our sins to be forgiven by Him, then we are equally responsible to forgive others for their sins against us. It says we are to be forgiving of one another, just as God in Christ also has forgiven us. Some of the sins that entangle us are malice, gossip, lies, broken possessions, broken promises, broken hearts, unkindness, partiality, neglect, and selfishness, even in the church. We frequently sin against one another as we live and worship together. Further, we have not always been loved well by others; each of us has been hurt, sometimes grievously. And so, amid the commands to welcome, serve, encourage, and love one another, we receive a command

for when our Christian brothers and sisters fail us in those very things. Our responsibility in the church is to forgive and love them.

The third sermon in the series was on Jonah 2:1-10. “This sermon focused on repentance and reconciliation. The theme of this sermon speaks to the young adults living oppressive lifestyles and the need to repent and look to God for another chance. Jonah says, “I cried for help from the depth of Sheol.” Sheol was the term used to describe “the abode of the dead.” We don’t know whether Jonah cried for help as he sank to the bottom of the sea or after he had been swallowed, but he thought he was as good as dead. But Jonah’s experience confirms that it is never too late to cry out to God. At the very last moment Jonah cried out for help. And God heard Jonah’s voice and answered. From this text we learn that it is never too late to pray to God. God will rescue you when you cry out to Him for help from the depths.

A bible study was also conducted utilizing the biblical foundation scriptures of Exodus 3:6-10 and Luke 4:18-19.

Another aspect of this model was to interview members of the justice system and Charleston County School System (vocational rehabilitation center) to become familiar with those who administered justice, education and vocational rehabilitation in the community. Officer and lawyer of the court, Eduardo K. Curry, was quite welcoming of the idea that someone in the community was willing to put forth the effort to engage the community in working in the area of reentry. The Deputy Chief Probation Officer, Parnel Legros, agreed that the community was in need of some group to provide help to eliminate the revolving door that so many offenders entered. Some of these persons could operate outside of jail with help and support. Rev. Dr. Author Holmes, Charleston

County School Board member and pastor of Allen African Methodist Episcopal Church, Edisto Island, provide insight into the Charleston County Schools District's plans for improving low income schools. Director Peter Zalka offered and provided insight into becoming rehabilitated into society in areas such as job placement and alcohol, drug, and mental health treatment programs.

### *Research Design*

The methodology used was the mixed methods approach which obtained both qualitative and quantitative data. In using the triangulation, a pre-test, a post survey and a questionnaire, were used as a resources of data collection. The mixed method approach as indicated by Robert Creswell combined the use of both the qualitative and the quantitative forms of research. Creswell asserts that the qualitative method gives voice to understanding the meaning that individuals or groups attribute to social problems. This method of research necessitates collecting data in the person's own environment and interpreting that data. Furthermore, Creswell reports that the mixed method approach "bases the inquiry on the assumption that collecting diverse types of data provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either quantitative or qualitative data alone."<sup>4</sup> This process of research involves beginning with a broad survey in order to obtain generalized results.

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<sup>4</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 4<sup>th</sup> ed (Los Angeles, CA: Sage, 2014), 14, 19.

*Measurement*

The objective of the project was to engage the faith community in ministry to black young adult's oppressive lifestyle. The method involved ascertaining the attitudes of the faith community in providing support to person living oppressive lifestyles. We got insight from the parishioners of Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church and the Edisto Island community. The group effort between the church, the community, the judicial system and law enforcement persons was deemed essential for the model to progress.

*Instrumentation*

The instrumentation for the project was pre and post-test surveys and a questionnaire designed especially for this project. Before a project of this nature can be implemented, it is necessary for participants to be willing to work with ex-offenders, people with drug and alcohol addictions, mental health issues, etc. Therefore, it is necessary to determine what the attitude of the community was concerning persons with oppressive lifestyles. There was also a need to determine if the faith community had a desire to help young adults with oppressive lifestyle that was in need of support. As a result of the feedback given from the pre-and post-test surveys and a questionnaire, it became apparent that there is an urgent need in Edisto Island for a program intended to minister to black young adults with oppressive lifestyles in this community. The need to include the oppressive young adults in wholesome activities and foster relationships is vital to the building of spiritual and moral sensitivity.

### *Stakeholders*

The professional associates who assisted me in this thesis and project are Reverend Dr. Lawrence Gordon, Reverend Dr. Myra Meggett and Reverend Dr. Phil Flowers. They are graduates of United Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry program. Reverend Myra Meggett is the pastor of Greater Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church. All gave encouragement and spiritual guidance in the development of this project. They gave insight as to the worth of such a project in light of the ministry to black young adults living oppressive lifestyles and the need of the faith-based community to become involved with being change agents, exhibiting the love, care and compassion over the struggles.

The context associates assisted in several ways. They are Vera Campbell, Marvette Smalls, Alfair Meredith, Una Joyce Barron, Desirae Townsend, Felicia Washington, and Tykida Brown, all members of Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church. The context associates were selected based on principles of honesty, integrity and confidentiality. They all assisted in development and review of questions for surveys and questionnaires and development and review of correspondence. Context associates helped in the planning of execution of the Liberating Support Forum. The planning began September 10, 2018 with our first context group meeting which was held at Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church in Edisto Island. An explanation was given of the project by me. All context associates were required to complete the consent forms (See Appendix E) to ensure their active participation and understanding of the role. The group was addressed by Rev. Dr. Lawrence Gordon on the biblical foundation for ministry to youth and young adults with oppressive life styles. He explained to the context associates

their role in the planning and implementation of the project. A refreshing meal was served to our participants. After this initial meeting, we met the following dates: (September 12, 18, and 25, and October 2, 9, 16, 23). At the September 12<sup>th</sup> meeting, we formulated a plan to first agree on a date and then find a place to accommodate the meeting. It was decided that October 30, 2018 would give us time to contact the presenters and the people to be invited. We sent out letters to churches (See Appendix A) on Edisto Island to inviting them to send a representative to the forum. Sister Vera Campbell, a context associate, took on the responsibility of finding and contacting some of the presenters.

Officer of the Court Eduardo K. Curry, Deputy, Chief Probation Officer Parnel Legros, school board member Rev. Dr. Author Holmes, South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department Director Peter Zalka were participants and resources persons. Once the place was secured, the plans turned to making sure the facility could meet all of the needs. Context associates work together making sure we had all equipment needed, welcome packets and planning and logistics. I served as facilitator for the forum.

### **Field Project**

#### *Project Seminar*

A forum was held on October 30<sup>th</sup> at Town and Country Inn (meeting room) in Charleston, South Carolina. The panel of representatives participating and giving leadership were from: the Charleston County Sheriff's Department, a counselor of the court, the Corrections Department, probation officer, County School Board, and representation from vocational rehabilitation and community. Attendees were invited

from a total of churches and business in the surrounding community of Edisto Island. There were approximately fifty persons in attendance. Panel members provided the group with information related to their program or role in the criminal justice system and school system. They addressed how drug and alcohol addiction and how black young adult's oppressive lifestyle are connected to their work. Presentation by the panel were followed by a question and answer session that allowed attendees and panel members to share openly and candidly about their experiences and clarify ways the faith community can support black young adults with oppressive lifestyle as they move toward liberation.

A welcome was given by me. Context associate Marvette Smalls introduced herself, gave an overview of the project and introduced the panel. Seminar participants were given an opportunity to introduce themselves. They shared their credentials and interest in the project. The Forum was divided into four sessions. Session One was titled "Justice System." Session Two was titled "Education System." Session Three was titled "Vocational Rehabilitation" and Session Four was "Biblical Mandate."

In Session One, Officer of the Court Eduardo K. Curry emphasized the need for rebuilding lives. He explained to the clients the work of the court in the Charleston County Courts. He indicated that there was a great back log in cases. Persons incarcerated need to get their time served and get on back out there and become productive. A person charged with an offense waiting on a trial or probation revocation needs a timely hearing. He stated that he is pushing, and others are pushing to try to move things along and become more efficient with it. While trying to reduce that backlog and deal with the problems in our community, he sees men and women as repeat offenders. There is a revolving door of arrest and then court appearance and then jail or prison, then release,



then arrest again.<sup>5</sup> Defense Lawyer Curry indicated that from his perspective, individuals who have broken the law and have been sentenced to serve time behind prison walls generally receive little regards from majority of society. Over the years the system has labeled these individuals such as ex-felon, ex-offender, ex-con, parolee, probationer, former convict, once-convicted criminal, formerly incarcerated. These are real people, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, daughters, sons, husbands and wives. And for whatever reason, they have now found themselves as an added statistic to another prison report, but they are every bit as human as we are; there are so many lives that are just practically destroyed, but there is always hope for those people if we can give them that helping hand, He also indicated that in the court here in Charleston a lot of the backlog is due to recidivism. Curry says sentencing are too high for none violent offenders. Curry also stated over the past forty years, the United States Congress has passed legislation expanding the federal criminal code intruding into an area typically reserved to the states. The tough-on-crime rhetoric of the 1980's and 1990's brought with it the enactment of various legislative initiatives: harsh mandatory minimum sentences for non-violent offenders, laws that restricted or abolished parole and early release, and strict liability disqualification from employment and government benefits based solely on the fact of conviction. The effect of this legislation was the creation of a new criminal class. This has contributed to soaring federal historically high rates of criminal recidivism. This is a price tag the black community can no longer afford to pay. Individuals who have served their sentences and abided by the law for some period afterward should be given the

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<sup>5</sup> Books P. Goldsmith, "Untitled Presentation," "Justice System Forum," Charleston, South Carolina, October 30, 2018.

opportunity to rid their slates of their criminal histories. Conviction for individuals who demonstrate that they will abide by the law are likely to reduce the cost of the criminal justice system and improve the lives of ex-offenders should be given the opportunity to have their criminal record expunged.

The problems of prisoner reentry are by now well known to policymakers. With many currently incarcerated and prior felony convictions, the challenge of integrating this large and growing population has become an urgent priority. Employment is widely considered a centerpiece of the reentry process with evidence that steady work can reduce the incentives that lead to crime. And yet, hindering this goal, we know that ex-offenders face bleak prospects in the labor market with the mark of a criminal record representing an important barrier to finding work. Overcoming the barriers to employment facing ex-offenders then represents an important challenge for policies aimed at effective prisoner reentry. Charges still appearing on a criminal record and can hinder job prospects, government programs, education, etc, where as it is almost impossible to have these barriers removed. There is a need for more expungement measures in an effort to have prior criminal conviction records be sealed, making the records unavailable through the states or federal repositories, allowing convicted felons a fair chance to overcome obstacle that otherwise impossibility, limiting their chances to becoming productive citizens in society. How then can we balance our interest in promoting the employment of ex-offenders with the desire to safeguard those employers? To date most policies focusing on ex-offenders have emphasized either promoting reentry or reducing risk. The first of these approaches seeks to facilitate employment for ex-offenders through various

strategies such as establishing antidiscrimination legislation, removing legal barriers, providing job training and placement services and the like.

### Session One Overview

Probation Officer Parnel Legros spoke during Session One. He shared that part of parole reentry into the community. He pointed out that his job as a parole officer is to provide effective supervision for that individual once they get out. He noted that from his perspective, when somebody gets out of prison, the first thing they would do is proclaim never to return. However, when asked what their plan was to stay out, they indicated that they had no plan. It becomes clear that you are working with persons with no plan for the future, limited education, and work experience, and /or alcohol and drug issues, along with mental health issues. He states, “it takes a village to raise a child.” His finding is that there are three types of parolees: (1) those with support at home and contact in the community to help them get a job and better education and/or trade; (2) those who test positive for drug usage and technical violation; and (3) those who pose a threat to themselves and others in the community.<sup>6</sup> How we plan for inmates’ transition to free living, including how they spend their time during confinement, the process by which they are released, and how they are supervised after release, is critical to public safety. This process is called prisoner reentry, and simply defined, includes all activities and programming conducted to prepare ex-convicts to return safely to the community and to live as law-abiding citizens. Most of those released from prison today have serious social and medical problems. They remain largely uneducated, unskilled, and usually without

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<sup>6</sup> Parnel Legros, “Untitled Presentation,” “Justice System Forum,” Charleston, South Carolina, October 30, 2018.

solid family supports and now they have the added stigma of a prison record and the distrust and fear that it inevitably elicits. Officer Legros pointed out that about three-quarters of all prisoners have a history of substance abuse, and one in six suffers from mental illness. Despite these needs, fewer than one third of exiting prisoners receive substance abuse or mental health treatment while in prison. And while the federal government has provided some states with additional funding to increase drug treatment in prison, the percentage of state prisoners participating in such program has been declining. Few inmates have marketable employment skills or sufficient literacy to become gainfully employed. Fully one-third of all prisoners were unemployed at their most recent arrest, and just sixty percent of inmates have GED or high school diploma. Part of the problem is money. State and federal prisons now consume an increasing share of tax dollars. It is not just that resources are scarce. Public sentiment and political rhetoric have also forced the reduction of many programs. State legislatures and prison administrators eliminated certain privileges and programs that prisoners previously enjoyed. A number of new “no-frills” statutes were passed, eliminating smoking, weight-lifting equipment, hot meals, personal clothing, telephone calls, family days, and so forth. Treatment and work programs have also been affected by society’s expectation that prison will be punishing and that prisoners should not receive free services for which law-abiding citizens must pay. Taken to its extreme, this principle prohibits many institutional benefits for prisoners such as education and work-training programs. In 1994, Congress eliminated the Pell grants for prisoners which paid their tuition for college courses taken while incarcerated. Scholarships to prisoners, according to congressional logic, were unfair to hard-working citizens who could not afford to pay for

colleges. Although less than one percent of all Pell grant funds went to prisoners, the Pell program died, and prison college programs are now virtually extinct in most states. This principle prohibits many institutional benefits for prisoners, such as education and work-training programs. More punitive public attitudes, combined with diminishing rehabilitation programs, means that more inmates struggle when reentry into society.

### *Session Two Overview*

Session Two, was led by school board member Author Holmes. He shared we are educating our kids well enough and that must change. This is a systemic problem, and the district has a responsibility to do anything it can to improve student achievement. No matter whose feelings are hurt. More resources are needed to educate children, especially rural and low-income areas such as Edisto Island. Now we need pre-K programs that will give children a greater head start in educating them well. There are significant disparities between wealthy and poorer schools, and white and black students across the “low country.” The teacher shortage has been lurking and growing for a long time. Our political leaders will probably seek quick-fix remedies. The long-term resolution to the teacher shortage will require a multi-faceted approach that addresses the systemic problems that caused the shortage in the first place. Pay is obviously a huge issue. South Carolina is funding k-12 education at about \$500 per student less than is required by law; so it should not be surprising that teachers pay here is lagging behind Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia and Florida. Low pay is a huge detriment to attracting out-of-state teachers. The borderline-insulting one percent raise approved this year by the General Assembly did not do much to help. A lack of professional autonomy is another

significant factor. No educator questions the need for accountability, but standardized tests now drive much of what happens in our classrooms. This is not an environment conducive to attracting and retaining the kind of people we want in our schools. The bubble-test culture has become oppressive and needs to be dialed down a couple of notches, so teachers can teach again. Teacher-preparation programs in our state have not grown to meet the needs in our schools and are not producing anywhere near enough teachers to fill the vacancies. This means the pool of qualified applicants for teaching positions is nowhere near the size it needs to be. Finally, teachers need time to plan, collaborate, help each other and reflect. And they need resources to help students who are struggling academically and with behavior and mental health problems. Classrooms today are more diverse than ever and have more challenges than ever. Teachers are expected to do more for more types of students than was ever expected in the past. The lack of time to do what is expected and the lack of support services for students who need more help are leading to the burnout and exodus of good and dedicated people. Board member Holmes concluded stating, there is a lot of work to do in bridging the gap in Charleston County School District. But with the help of churches, parents, law enforcement, community leaders and others, it can and will be done.

### *Session Three Overview*

Session Three was led by Director Peter Zalka with the South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department (SCVRD). This unit serves people who want to work but are discouraged from doing so by a physical or mental disability. SCVRD provides drug and alcohol addiction treatment programs, evaluations, jobs, skills training and job placement

for employment. It is all too common for young men and women to struggle with behavioral issues as they come of age. Poor lifestyle choices begin to compound, and issues of self-worth and delinquency make these young men and women lose control of their lives. Director Zalka says our program helps these young men gain confidence in themselves because they actually know how to do work-related tasks and accomplish tangible goals. This renews their sense of self and helps turn boys into men and girls into women. Young men and women that we help at our program suffer from a variety of behavioral issues, including the following: substance abuse, sex and porn addiction, dual diagnosis mental disorder, anxiety and depression, self-harm, problematic peer relationship, academic issues, anger management and many more. We provide services to help offenders successfully transition from prison to a productive life in the community, and we help rehabilitate adult offenders and steer youth to set new, positive directions for their lives. Such as halfway houses and work-release programs, day reporting, diversion and pretrial services, residential treatment, family supports, and dispute resolution and mediation services. Through services such as literacy training, housing location, and alcohol and substance comprehensive treatment, and case management, offenders gain skills and become empowered to succeed. This program helps people to secure employment, participate in education and life-skills training, and learn to give back to their community through community service experiences. Programs are operated through agreements with the Federal Bureau of Prisons and U.S. Probation Department, as well as states and counties. Our partnerships within local communities represents one of the nation's best opportunities to engage citizens in the process of offering acceptance, service and guidance to formerly incarcerated citizens. These efforts not only provide

life-changing benefits for the formerly incarcerated but also make a direct impact on the health and vitality of the local community. Zalka concluded by encouraging persons to visit their website to learn more about their programs and service at [www.scvrd.net](http://www.scvrd.net).

#### *Session Four Overview*

Secession Four was led by Rev. Dr. Gordon. Much of his presentation came from the research of Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., in their book, *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology*. Dr. Gordon, quoting from this book, said,

There the chains of the slave will be knocked off, and he shall enjoy the liberty of the sons of God. We know that the influence of prejudice and the love of power and avarice will oppress us here, and exclude us from privileges, on account of our color; but we know it will not exclude us from heaven, for God is no respecter of person. Though we must be despised here, we know that our Redeemer Liveth.<sup>7</sup>

Dr. Gordon gave the biblical foundation from both the Old and New Testaments of how people of faith can be involved with person living oppressive lifestyles. Dr. Gordon stated that black churches have a responsibility to help organize the resource of the life of the community to help liberate our young adults who have fallen in traps of despair. Gordon stated that the church has a moral responsibility to aid in everyday suffering of its members and to a great extent its nonmembers.

Gordon adds, professionals often are charged to care for persons living oppressive lifestyles. Often with the counseling context, however, clients' spirituality is an important part of the healing process. Therefore, from a pastoral care prospective, one's spiritual and religious life is a critical feature of the developmental process and can serve to

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<sup>7</sup> Cornel West and Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., *African American Religious Thought: An Anthology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 339.



improve one's overall well-being. Furthermore, positive benefits to incorporating spiritual nurturing and faith into one's life, including improved physical and psychological health, is of utmost importance. Therefore, pastoral counseling is expected to assess the impact of a client's spirituality and religion on his or her mental health and overall well-being. Moreover, attending to the spiritual needs of persons is an essential part of developing culturally sensitive treatment plans and recommendations. Not unlike other groups, African American families rely on spirituality as a source of support as they face various challenges and familial stressors. Spirituality and religion offer some explanation as to why African American are better adjusted and more psychologically well than some experts expect and predict. African American identifies religion, church service and God as a core aspect of their coping and rely on their religion and spirituality during difficult life transitions. African American assert that attending worship services and bible study, being involved in their churches, listening to sermons and gospel music allow them to conceptualize their struggles within the larger struggles between good and evil. Because of the salience of spiritual and religion in the experience of African Americans, it behooves professional counselors to increase their knowledge and awareness of the African American religious experience, particularly as it relates to psychological health. African American often choose their spiritual leaders and churches as resources for their mental health needs instead of professional counselors. In addition, the black church has experienced change, progression, challenges, struggles, and resilience. Therefore, professional counselors must understand the historical role and relevance of the black church in African American communities in order to better understand African American mental health helping seeking behaviors.

African Americans have certainly made considerable strides in advancement compared to previous decades, notably in the areas of education. African American communities face issues such as disproportionate rates of physical illness, financial strains, anxiety, depression and family issues. Given the historical involvement of the black church in all aspects of the individual lives of the African American, it is understandable that many African Americans may view their local church as a viable alternative resource to professional counselors. Therefore, as black clergy, we must educate ourselves in the field of pastoral care to assist in combating concerns facing many African American. Dr. Gordon concluded his presentation by sharing various programs that his church is doing to help improve the life of youth and young adult who are oppressed such as pastoral care counseling, clothing, feeding, and referral resource.

The Forum concluded with Rev. Myra Megget giving a presentation and encouraging those in attendance to take what was shared and apply into practice in their church and community. At this point post-test survey and questionnaires were passed out to be filled in by participants. This was followed by the host pastor, Rev. Brown, thanking everyone for their presence and participation. Rev. Phil Flowers gave closing prayer.

### *Data and Methods*

A mixed methodology was used yielding both qualitative and quantitative data in this project. A pre-test survey was administered at the start of the forum and a post-test survey was administered following the question and answer portion of the forum. The survey draws from the attitudes toward oppressive lifestyle persons (ATP) scale. This gives a measure of negative stereotypes, internal and external attributions of

responsibility and anticipated social acceptance/distance relative to oppressive lifestyle persons. On a two-point scale with 1 Agree or Disagree, forum attendees were asked the following pre and post questions:

- Most people living oppressive lifestyle are dangerous.
- Most who live oppressive lifestyle are dishonest.
- I would avoid associating with anyone living oppressive lifestyle.
- Most people living oppressive lifestyle do not deserve to be liberated.
- Many people convicted of crimes in the courts are overly sentenced.
- The courts are fair to everyone's hearing or trial.
- Person with drug and alcohol addiction can be recovered.
- I have a great deal of trust and respect for the police.
- All schools provided the necessary resources for students to achieve high scores and succeed.
- The School District decisions are fair to all schools in the district.
- Systematic oppression as it relates to black young adults' oppressive lifestyle can be overcome.

Participants were also asked to report the number of people they knew personally who are living oppressive lifestyles. In addition, forum attendees were administered a liberating support questionnaire (See Appendix D) to further measure the impact of the forum and to gauge participants' willingness to support faith-based person living oppressive lifestyle ministry efforts in their churches, religious organization and groups. Responses to the Liberating Support Questionnaire were coded on a two-point scale Agree or Disagree. Participants responded to the following items:

- This forum was informative.
- I have an understanding of the faith community's role in supporting person living oppressive lifestyle in the community.
- I believe the faith community of Edisto Island and Charleston County should help persons living oppressive life style in the community.
- I feel pastors would encourage our congregation to ministry to oppressive lifestyle persons.
- I believe members in your church would support oppressive lifestyle in effort to liberate them.
- The faith-based community would work hard to remove any obstacles to starting an oppressive lifestyle ministry at your church.
- I believe and understand systematic oppression highly contributes to black young adult oppressive lifestyle.

### *Demographic*

The thirty forum participants completed the pre- and post-test surveys and Liberating Support Questionnaire. The responding group was comprised of (30%) men and (70%) women. All were African American. They all had high school education and diploma. Forty percent of the respondents had college degrees. Fifty-five percent of the respondents had children under the age of eighteen living at home compared to (45%) with no children under age eighteen at home.

## *Results*

The paired sample test was used to compare the means of responses given on the pre- and post-test surveys and questionnaires. Table 1, 2 and 3 found under the Illustrations in the front of the document outlines the findings in a graph. This contains the questions and responses from the pre/post forum survey questions and answers before and after the forum. Table 4 and 5 found in the same section gives a list of the liberating support questions before and after the forum.

Data collected from the pre-test survey administered indicates there was change in responses to items on the pre-test survey compared to the post test survey. Most participants were significantly in support of the project. Data collected from post-test survey and support questionnaire administered of the forum indicated a great willingness to support oppressive lifestyle-focused ministries within their faith-based communities.

## *Discussion*

These findings are consistent with the hypothesis of this research project. Furthermore, the results from the pre/post forum survey couple with the positive responses on the oppressive lifestyle support questionnaire suggest that there is a willingness to interact with oppressive lifestyle people and an increased understanding of systematic oppression, and there is an overall spirit of interest and willingness to engage and minister to oppressive lifestyle people in Edisto Island through faith-based settings and organizations.

### **Summary of Learning**

As I reflect on the choice of ministry to black young adults, oppressive lifestyle and their stories of having to do jail and/or prison time, drug additions, sexual transmitted diseases, unemployment, dead beat dads, low education, mental problems and felony records, I realize that many of these persons have no hope of being liberated. I realize that even people with oppressive lifestyle need a place to be wanted and helped. I have persons in my congregation who have lived in the Edisto Island community all of their lives. When I became pastor, my ministry of compassion towards people living oppressive lifestyle drew people in Edisto Island to join the Calvary African Method Episcopal Church and seek help as they began to feel welcome and started to integrate themselves into the congregation.

We learned from professionals who participated in the forum, such as law enforcement person, justice system persons, education person, and vocational rehabilitation person, that people are in great need of assistance. The number of people living oppressive lifestyle in Edisto Island and Charleston County was enormous. The faith community must realize that the harvest is great, but the laborers are few and accept the challenge to minister to this group of people.

The first phase of the project began with sermons on love, forgiveness and another chance. I deemed it necessary to address this topic of love because it was an imperative from God that we love one another and care for “the least of these.” Jesus’ concern for the weak and the vulnerable is also a challenging exhortation for Christian to model the same concerns. It is often assumed that the “the least of these” are society’s poor and downtrodden, and that, by implication, Jesus would have us support any faith-

based programs that aims to help hurting people such as black young adults living oppressive lifestyle.

The next phase of the project was in the area of renewal and rehabilitation through bible study, revival and pastoral care counseling. It was most important to teach biblical principles of discipleship. It was also important for people coming to faith to learn that restoration and renewal are possible in Christ. This was essential before we could be able to go outside the walls of the church to teach and mentor others. It is important to study about love, forgiveness and caring for other, as it is important to God and is linked to our eternal home with God. The researcher observed that after the focused sermons, bible study and revivals, there was an eagerness to participate by the members at Calvary African Methodist Episcopal Church.

Calvary AME Church collaborated with Mt. Olive Baptist Church of Edisto Island and Pastor Gadsden, First Missionary Baptist Church of Edisto Island and Pastor Morrison, Allen AME Church, Edisto Island and Pastor Holmes, and Bethel AME Church of Edisto Island Pastor Hunter in effort to help black young adults living oppressive life styles within the Edisto Island community. As a result, this project has generated enthusiasm and the participation of other churches and pastors in collaboration indicates that this a proven model for black young adults' liberation: breaking the chains of oppressive lifestyle to society.

### **Suggested Improvements for Future Projects**

The participants noted there was a need for training sessions for teams from the other churches in Edisto Island on how to work with oppressive lifestyle people with implementation from professional persons of the Forum and others. It was also suggested

that governmental officials as resource persons in the forum would be beneficial for the expertise that they bring. Training on safe sanctuary policies and procedures to create an environment in which there are boundaries of safe space to fellowship within the community of faith is needed as well.

Finally, there is a realization that smaller communities with limited government institutions cannot provided for some of the needs of its citizens. Therefore, it is imperative that, for long-term sustainability of this project thesis, the small membership churches in these communities such as Edisto Island must mobilize and form Faith Based Organizations and/or Community Based Organizations to assist them in collaborative efforts to meet the challenges of creating, developing and maintaining institutions to address the needs of young people as they struggle to overcome oppressive lifestyles. The formation of these institutions should also help these churches and groups receive government and private grants to aid them in this mission.



**APPENDIX A**  
**FORUM FLYER**

**A DOCTORAL PROJECT**

**BLACK YOUNG ADULTS LIBERATION:  
BREAKING THE CHAINS OF OPPRESSIVE  
LIFESTYLES**

**SYMPOSIUM**

**MENTORING, NETWORKING AND SPIRITUAL  
FORMATION**

**AT**

**TOWN IN COUNTRY INN  
2008 SAVANNAH HWY, CHARLESTON, SC 29407**

**OCTOBER 30, 2018**

**TIME- 7:00 P M**

**THIS IS A FREE EVENT AND OPEN TO ENTIRE  
COMMUNITY**

**(QUESTIONS: CONTACT REV. NATHAN M. BROWN  
brownnathanm@aol.com**

**APPENDIX B**  
**PRE-TEST SURVEY**

### **Pre-test Survey**

On a two-point scale with 1 Agree or 2 Disagree, forum attendees were asked the following pre and post-test questions:

- (1) Most people living oppressive lifestyle are dangerous.
- (2) Most who live oppressive lifestyle are dishonest.
- (3) I would avoid associating with anyone living oppressive lifestyle.
- (4) Most people living oppressive lifestyle do not deserve to be liberated.
- (5) Many people convicted of crimes in the courts are overly sentenced.
- (6) The courts are fair to everyone's hearing or trial.
- (7) Person with drug and alcohol addiction can be recovered.
- (8) I have a great deal of trust and respect for the police.
- (9) All schools provided the necessary resources for students to achieve high scores and succeed.
- (10) The School District decisions are fair to all schools in the district.
- (11) Systematic oppression as it relates to black young adults' oppressive lifestyle can be overcome.

**APPENDIX C**  
**POST-TEST SURVEY**

### **Post-test Survey**

- (1) After listing to the presenter, I would help person living oppressive lifestyle?
- (2) Subsequently I think persons living oppressive lifestyle deserves to be liberated?
- (3) After listing to the forum, I believe person with drug and alcohol problems can recover and be liberated?
- (4) After the forum I believe people living oppressive lifestyles can receive the help necessary?
- (5) I believe people with felony criminal records deserve to have their record expunge?
- (6) The faith base community should be involved in liberating people with oppressive lifestyles?
- (7) Hiring more minority law enforcement officers will regain trust in the Black community?
- (8) Subsequently systematic oppression plays a large part of people living oppressive lifestyle?
- (9) Non-violence offender's laws should be amended such as lower sentencing, expungement programs, in effort to help laminate and liberate people living oppressive lifestyle?
- (10) After listing to the forum, I believe hiring more teachers along with pay increase would better our school system?
- (11) After the forum I believe employment is the key to for people living oppressive lifestyle success?

## **APPENDIX D**

### **LIBERATING SUPPORT QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **Liberating Support Questionnaire**

Forum participants were asked to fill out this questionnaire which is coded on a two-point scale Agree or Disagree. Participants responded to the following items:

- (1) This forum was informative.
- (2) I have an understanding of the faith community's role in supporting person living oppressive lifestyle in the community.
- (3) I believe the faith community of Edisto Island and Charleston County should help person living oppressive life style in the community.
- (4) I feel pastors would encourage our congregation to ministry to oppressive lifestyle persons.
- (5) I believe members in your church would support oppressive lifestyle in effort to liberate them.
- (6) The faith-based community would work hard to remove any obstacles to starting an oppressive lifestyle ministry at your church.
- (7) I believe and understand systematic oppression highly contributes to black young adult oppressive lifestyle.



**APPENDIX E**  
**CONSENT FORM**

## A DOCTORAL PROJECT

### BLACK YOUNG ADULTS LIBERATION: BREAKING THE CHAINS OF OPPRESSIVE LIFESTYLES

Please read and complete this form carefully. If you are willing to participate in this forum, ring the appropriate responses and sign and date the declaration at the end. If you do not understand anything and would like more information, please ask.

- I have had the research satisfactorily explained to me in verbal and / or written form by the researcher. YES / NO
  
- I understand that I may withdraw from this study at any time without having to give an explanation. YES / NO
  
- I understand that all information must be treated in strict confidence and that I will not be named in any written work arising from this study. YES / NO

I freely give my consent to participate in this forum and research study and have been given a copy of this form for my own information.

**Signature:** .....

**Date:** .....

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